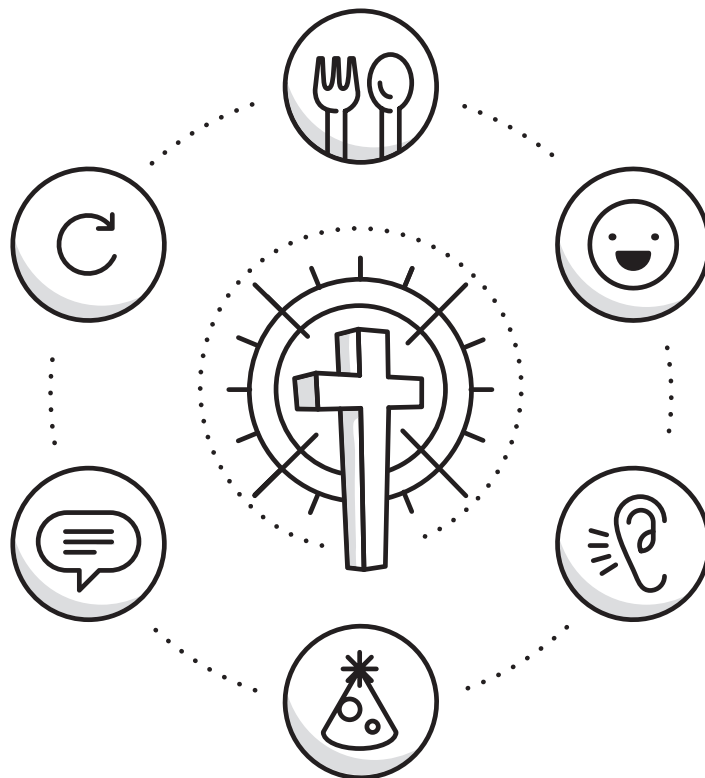


THE STORYFORMED WAY

Leaders' Guide



SATURATE
RESOURCES

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Here you'll find the Leaders' Notes and the Walking It Out Handout for each week all compiled as one document. Each one is also available separately along with the other resources for each week.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STORYFORMED WAY

As a missional church we began to ask ourselves a clarifying question: "What is the mission? What is the mission Jesus gave His Church?" The surprisingly simple answer is, "GO, and make disciples!" Discipleship is the mission. There are lots of different experiences, teaching, and events that are part of accomplishing this mission, but we could not miss the fact that making disciples was our primary mission.

Another important thing God showed us was that we were to "make" disciples. The word make implies a process—a process that has steps to it and is intentional. This is not to say that discipleship is a one-size-fits-all process. But there must be some common foundational pieces to everyone's discipleship process that help create "channels" of learning that can, and hopefully will, be "filled up" for the rest of our Christian walk (2 Tim. 2:2). By the way, we believe the discipleship process begins at the point of relationship, not at the point of conversion!

We also believe the use of stories and times of deep, shared interaction are a historically proven and powerful way of helping people on their discipleship journey. We live in stories. Stories are the language of our world. Stories speak to the mind, the body, the emotions—our spirits. In a story, we can identify with situations we have never been in. Our imagination can be unlocked to dream what before was unimaginable. Together we learn about life as we connect through stories.

We all yearn to know many of the same parts of the Story. . . .

What happened before time began? How did all of this start?

Who or what created me?

Why do I exist?

Does my life really matter? Does it have meaning? To whom?

What happens after I die?

Why is the world the way it is? Things don't seem to be going that well. . . .

The Storyformed Way was created to be a starting point of discipleship. It is a ten-week journey through the Story with times of dialogue, interaction, and reflection that serve as a foundation for new disciples (anyone with whom you are in a relationship) and gives more mature disciples an easy, reproducible method for introducing groups of people (or an individual) to the claims of Christ and what it means to be a disciple. Do this often!

Channels of learning that will be introduced and reinforced throughout The Storyformed Way include:

Creation

The Nature of Sin

Atonement

Grace

Faith

Attributes of God

The Holy Spirit—The Person and Work

Jesus—The Person and Work

Lordship of Christ

The Trinity

The Kingdom of God

The Gospel

Gospel Identity and Cultural Rhythms

Community

God's Election of the Saints

Sonship (God as our Father)

Stewardship

Biblical Manhood/Womanhood

Prayer

Social Justice

The Sovereignty of God

Forgiveness and Guilt

Evangelism

End Times (Eschatology)

WEEK 1: BEGINNINGS & SEPARATION

Before you begin . . .

BIG PICTURE

This is where we're going—the big ideas you want people to understand more deeply during this session.

- God is holy and Creator
- Humans created in His image—Imago Dei
- Humans created to live forever
- Humans given volition/choice to trust God or self
- Humans rebel and are cast out of garden and God's presence
- Humans were never created to determine/judge good and evil for themselves. This is God's sole authority.
- God pursues rebellious humans
- Missionary identity/missionary God

SET THE TRAINING TONE

Especially this first week, spend some time setting up the right atmosphere for dialogues that will foster growth.

- We are here to learn and change (not just a social time, but we also desire to grow closer and build community).
- Have fun, and keep things moving and participatory.
- Welcome a challenge from me or others in the group (give each other permission to challenge us—probe, ask questions, etc.).
- Strive to be honest and vulnerable, and we should honor that by keeping what is shared in confidence.
- We are going to try to answer questions as much as possible from within the Story found in the Bible. Everything we need to learn about God and humans can be found right here in His Story!

THE STORY & DIALOGUE

PRE-STORY SETUP

Does it seem to you that things are working perfectly in the world today? Are things the way they seem like they should be? Have you ever wondered why? What is wrong with the world? As we begin to look deeper into the Story of God and humans and this world, we will see that everything did not start out bad. In fact things were amazing and beautiful!

Alternately . . . ask this question:

If you could imagine the world the way it should be, what would it be like?

There was a day when the world was very much like you described . . . and a day when it will be again.

What if we could live in a world where there was no sickness or pain or death? No pollution, poverty, war, or hatred? Is it possible that the world we all want, what we all dream of, is exactly the world God originally created and intended for us?! And what if God actually has a plan and a way to set everything right again? The Bible shows us there is such a way. Let's start at the beginning of the Story. . . .

SCENE 1 | BEGINNINGS

Story from Genesis 1–3, Job 38, Isaiah 14, Revelation 12

This story is found in the Bible and is about God, a Being that was before all things and created this earth and everything on it. God alone always does what is good and right and perfect—the Bible calls Him holy.

While God was creating the foundations of the earth, angels watched with amazement, singing together and shouting for joy! God created these beautiful angels to worship Him. But some of these angels rebelled against God and His ways—any rebellion against God is called sin. God will not allow sin to remain in His presence, so He sent the rebellious angels into darkness on the earth, to face final punishment later.

{Pause for a moment. . . .}

SCENE 2 | FIRST HUMANS

Story from Genesis 1–2, Psalm 8

Then God decided He would create another being, one that was lower than the angels, called a human. So God took the earth and prepared it as a place for humans to live. His Spirit moved over the surface of the earth as:

He made light, separating it from the darkness.
He divided the oceans and the sky.
He gathered the waters so dry land would appear.
He grew plants, flowers, and trees with seeds to reproduce themselves.
He created the sun, the moon, and the stars—setting the days and seasons in to motion.
He filled the seas with fish, the sky with birds, and the earth with all kinds of wild animals!

God put great care and creativity into all of His creation. Then He looked at everything and said, “This is good!”

After He had prepared the earth God said, “Let us make humans in Our image, to be like Us. They will be in charge of the earth and the plants and the animals that live on it.”

So God formed man from the dust of the ground and breathed His own breath into him, giving him life. This man would be called Adam.

Later, God created the first woman, Eve, from one of Adam’s ribs, to be a companion and helper for Adam. So God created both the man and the woman in His own image.

God blessed the man and the woman with the ability to continue creating through having children. He told them, “Be fruitful and multiply.” He placed the humans in a beautiful garden, a place where they had everything they needed to live life to the fullest.

In the center of the garden God placed two special trees. One was the Tree of Life, and the other was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God said Adam and Eve could eat from any tree in the garden, except for one: the tree that would give them knowledge of good and evil. He warned them not to eat from this tree or they would surely die.

Daily God would come and spend time with the humans, walking with them in the cool of the day. He showed them how to live in the best possible way—a life lived close to God and under His protection—a life that is full and complete. Adam and Eve loved being with God.

As God looked over all of His creation, He thought, “This is very good!” After creating all of this God rested, and He set aside a day of rest each week for His creation.

SCENE 1 & 2 DIALOGUE I BEGINNINGS & FIRST HUMANS

Remember this is a dialogue, not a quiz. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

1. How did God make humans unique among His creations?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- They were made in God’s image—this is known as Imago Dei.

- He breathed his own breath into Adam.
- He was given authority to rule over the garden and all the animals.

2. How do we know humans were created good?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- They were made in God's image!
- God declared them "excellent."

3. Who do you view yourself to be? What makes up your identity (roles, family, abilities, occupation)? How important are these things on making up your identity?

4. Be honest: What "identity" in your life currently provides the most powerful dose of self-worth?

5. What would change if our identity depended on the Imago Dei for our worth?

6. What kind of relationship did God have with the humans?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- He spent time with Adam and Eve. They loved being with God.
- He gave them responsibility—to care for God's creation and to create.
- He showed them the best possible way to live.
- He protected them from evil.
- They loved being with God. He gave them the ability to choose.

7. What kind of relationship did Adam and Eve have with each other?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- Close, Eve came out of Adam's body.
- Naked and unashamed.

8. What do you think is significant about the two trees in the center of the garden?

9. Do you think that humans were created to live forever? What shows us this in the Story?

10. What do we learn about God in this scene?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- God is the source of all blessing.
- God is all powerful. God is the creator of all things.
- God created humans in His image.

- God showed the humans how to live in the best possible way.
- God trusts humans with the care of His creation.
- God gives humans the ability to create.
- God provides and takes care of humans—the garden had everything they needed.
- God enjoys His creation—He said it was excellent in every way!
- God sets aside time for rest!

11. What do we know so far about the meaning of life? Why are we here?

Be sure to direct folks back to the Story for their answers!

12. If this Story does not center on us (but on God), how do we find our purpose to life? What are humans doing with Him in the Story?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- Enjoying and learning from God—spending time with Him and living in His ways.

13. How does that contrast to the way people think in our culture?

This question should be allowed to create some tension here.

SCENE 3 | SEPARATION

Story from Genesis 1–3

One day, a serpent—the most clever of all the animals in the garden—came to the woman. He asked Eve, “Did God really say you must not eat any of the fruit in the garden?”

Eve told him, “No, we can eat from any tree in the garden. It’s only the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that we are not allowed to eat from—or even touch, or we will die.”

The serpent said to her, “You won’t die! God knows your eyes will be opened when you eat it. You will become just like God—knowing everything, both good and evil.”

When Eve saw how good and delicious the fruit looked and that it would make her wise, she took some of it and ate it. She also gave some to Adam, her husband, who was with her, and he ate it! They chose not to believe God and to believe the lie. Instantly their eyes were opened, and they became filled with shame and fear. They strung fig leaves together around their hips to cover their nakedness.

Toward evening they heard God walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees. God called to them, “Where are you?” Adam answered, “I heard you coming and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.” God answered, “Why are you

ashamed of being naked? Did you eat the fruit I told you not to eat?” Adam blamed Eve, saying, “It was the woman you gave me. She gave me some.” Then God said to Eve, “How could you do this?” Eve blamed the serpent, saying, “The serpent tricked me into eating the fruit.”

So God said to the snake, “Because you have done this, You will crawl on your belly, and you will eat dust all the days of your life. You will be the enemy of the woman and her children. You will bite his heel, but he will crush your head.”

God’s heart was broken because of their disobedience, but he could not ignore what they had done. God always does what is good, right, and perfect—His perfect justice required that there be consequences for rebellion. So God punished Adam and Eve by throwing them out of the Garden outside of His care and protection. No longer following God’s way, they were now subject to sickness, pain, and death. God continued to love Adam and Eve—He even created clothing for them out of animal skins so they would not be ashamed outside of the Garden.

SCENE 3 DIALOGUE I SEPARATION

Remember this is a dialogue, not a quiz. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

14. How did God make humans unique among His creations?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- They were made in God’s image—this is known as Imago Dei.

15. What did Adam and Eve choose to do in the story?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- Believed the lie of the serpent, chose not to trust God’s words, trusted in themselves apart from God, and trusted in their own abilities to manage good and evil in their lives.

16. What was the real temptation Adam and Eve were presented with by the serpent?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- To choose self apart from relationship with God (pride).
- To believe we are more equipped to manage the good and evil, right and wrong in our own lives.

17. An Secular Story¹

Birth > School > College > Starter Job > Starter Marriage > Picket Fence > 2.5 Kids > Second Marriage > Secure Job > Dump Kids > Retire to Florida > Death

¹ American Story slide idea from our friend Jeremy Pryor, <http://jeremypryor.wordpress.com>

- What is the motive behind this “Secular story”?
- What is the outcome focused on?
- Whom does this story center on—whose story is being lived out?
- How powerful is this story in our culture? In your experience?
- Do you think you can live this story and still please God?
- How is my version of the “story” different from the way God started writing the Story?
- Is there a way to get back to living in the “original” story (God’s Story)?

18. What was God’s initial response to Adam right after he had disobeyed?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- God went looking for them, asked a question, “Where are you?”

19. Do you think God didn’t know where they were? Why did He go looking and asking questions?

20. What was the consequence of their actions?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- Judgment—separation from God.
- Relationships broken with God and each other.
- Sickness, pain, and death.
- Mercy—He did not destroy them and also covered their nakedness and shame.

21. Why do you think God required consequences for their sin and rebellion? Why didn’t God just overlook their rebellion?

- God will never allow sin to remain in His presence. He always does good, right, and perfect (holy).

22. Are we like Adam and Eve or different from them?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- We are just like them.
- Often, despite knowing God’s commands, we choose to go our own way and rebel.
- We manage right and wrong from our own perspective instead of from God’s.
- We try to be our own god and displace God in our lives.

23. What do we learn about God in this story?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- He seems to know all things: He knew Adam and Eve had eaten from the tree.
- God will never allow evil to remain in His presence; He judged each of the characters in the story. He cast Adam and Eve out of the garden and away from His presence. He promised One who would come to kill the serpent.
- He keeps His promises; although they did not die immediately, Adam and Eve's nature was changed, so God would not allow them to take from the tree of life. Also, He reminded Adam that he would return to dust.
- He is the source of all grace; He warned them in advance. He made clothing for them of animal skins. The innocent animals were killed on their behalf so they could have clothing/covering.

ENDING THE DIALOGUE

FURTHER APPLICATION

27. If what we discussed today is true, how does/should it affect your life?
28. How would it affect us as a community?
29. How would it affect others in our neighborhood, our city?

WALKING IT OUT

The Walking It Out Handout is a tool to help us engage the Story individually and with others during the week. This session alone is not nearly enough for someone to be saturated in the Story and begin living out the implications of the Story in everyday life with a community.

As you distribute them, point out a few key things from the handouts you as a leader have already found meaningful.

WALKING IT OUT . . .

WEEK 1 | BEGINNINGS & SEPARATION

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT . . .

- For the next few days try and notice something new about the way people, animals, nature—everything—is created. Do you see an amazingly creative design behind these things? If God’s first act was as an artist designing a beautiful creation, how should that impact us?
- Think about your own body, or that of your child (if you have one). How amazing it is! What keeps your heart beating? Where does your creativity, intelligence, and life come from? Think about having the “breath of life” in you.
- What questions would you ask an amazing “Creator of All” about the world if you had the chance?
- If God were to design a test especially for you and “put a tree in your garden,” what might that be?
- How would Satan or “evil” tempt you to choose your ways over God’s?
- Spend some time this week talking to God about these things—He’s listening! (Try listening to Him too.) :)

THINGS TO READ ABOUT . . .

Genesis 1–3 | Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/gen1-3>.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 | “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.”

“The Pleasure of God in His Creation” | A great article by John Piper about why God is pleased with what He created and what creation reveals to us about God: <http://bit.ly/piper-creation>.

The Sacred Romance | An eye-opening book that shows throughout the Story, God is pursuing rebellious humanity: <http://bit.ly/sacred-romance>.

Expelled: No Intelligence Allowed | A documentary film exposing widespread persecution of scientists and educators who are pursuing legitimate, opposing scientific views to the predominant scientific views begun by Darwin: <http://bit.ly/expelled>.

“What every theologian should know about creation, evolution and design” | An article by William Dembski that defines intelligent design and other often-misused terms: <http://bit.ly/id>.

Verses of the Bible to memorize (they’ll help you remember some big ideas from this week’s story):

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”
—Psalm 19:1

“All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” —Romans 3:23

WEEK 2 | SINFUL HUMANITY

Before you begin . . .

BIG PICTURE

This is where we're going—the big ideas you want people to understand more deeply during this session.

- Every human has chosen to sin—to choose self over and apart from God.
- God looks at the heart.
- Self and sin lead to separation and death. Obedience leads to life and relationship with God.
- God has created and commanded us to be fruitful.
- God is the source of grace and mercy.

SET THE TRAINING TONE

You will not need to repeat this list every week, but be aware of these and reestablish the right tone as necessary.

- We are here to learn and change (not just a social time, but we also desire to grow closer and build community).
- Have fun, and keep things moving and participatory.
- Welcome a challenge from me or others in the group (give each other permission to challenge us—probe, ask questions, etc.).
- Strive to be honest and vulnerable, and we should honor that by keeping what is shared in confidence.
- We are going to try and answer questions as much as possible from within the Story found in the Bible. Everything we need to learn about God and humans can be found right here in His Story!

REVIEW LAST WEEK'S STORY

- Last week . . . we looked at God creating the angels and the foundations of the earth. We saw Lucifer's attempt to place himself above God—to be like God. We learned that God will never allow evil to remain in His presence, so He cast Lucifer and the demons out of heaven, away from His presence.

- Last week . . . we also saw how God finished creating the earth and all living things, including humans, which He created in His image to be like Him. God blessed the humans by sharing His authority with them and telling them to be fruitful and multiply, continuing in creation. We learned humans were given the ability to choose and ultimately chose to disobey God and attempt to manage right and wrong for themselves, apart from God.
- Last week . . . again, God will not allow evil and rebellion to remain in His presence, so He cast Adam and Eve out of the garden, away from His presence. God continued to show His care for the humans by not destroying them and also creating clothing for them out of animal skins so they would not be naked and ashamed outside of the garden.
- Last week . . . what really stuck with you from our last time together?

THE STORY & DIALOGUE

SCENE 1 | TWO BROTHERS

Story from Genesis 4

After leaving the garden, Adam and Eve had two sons named Cain and Abel. When they grew up, Cain became a farmer, and Abel became a shepherd. At harvest time, Cain brought to God a gift of his farm produce, while Abel brought several of the very best lambs from his flock. God accepted Abel and his offering of the lambs, but He did not accept Cain and his offering. This made Cain very angry and upset.

“Why are you so angry?” God asked him. “Why do you look so down? Won’t you be accepted if you do what is right? But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at your door, waiting to attack and destroy you, and you must bring it under control.”

Later, Cain suggested to his brother, Abel, “Let’s go out into the fields. . . .” While they were there, Cain attacked and killed his brother. This was the first murder described in the Bible.

Afterward, God asked Cain, “Where is your brother Abel?”

“I don’t know!” Cain replied. “Am I supposed to keep track of him wherever he goes?” But God said, “What have you done? Listen . . . your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground! You are now banished from the ground you have corrupted with your brother’s blood. No longer will it produce abundant crops for you, no matter how hard you work! From now on you will be a homeless fugitive on the earth, constantly wandering from place to place.”

Cain replied to God, “My punishment is more than I can handle! You have removed me from my land and from Your presence; You have made me a wandering fugitive. All who see me will try to kill me!”

God replied, “No! They will not kill you. Anyone who tries to harm you will receive seven times your punishment.”

So God put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to kill him.

Then Cain left God’s presence and traveled to the land east of the Garden.

SCENE 1 DIALOGUE I TWO BROTHERS

Remember this is a dialogue, not a quiz. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

NOTE: You’ll need to move quickly through this dialogue to have enough time for Scene 2.

1. What did God say to Cain after He rejected his offering? What do you think that meant?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- Won’t you be accepted if you do what is right? But if you refuse to do what is right, sin is waiting. . . .
- God looks at the hearts—it was a heart issue. God spoke to Cain about doing what he already knew was right. He didn’t do it; it’s a heart issue—not a gift issue!

2. Why do you think Cain killed his brother?

3. What do you do when you don’t feel accepted?

4. What are you willing to do for acceptance?

5. How would your life change if you knew you were already loved and accepted regardless of what you did?

6. What was God’s reaction to the murder? Why didn’t God just ignore what Cain had done? What punishment did Cain deserve?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Cain deserved death.
- God did not repay evil with evil—He showed fairness and grace.

7. What do we learn about humans in this story? (Where in the story did you see this?)

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- We try to hide from our sins.
- We want what other people have.

- We have the choice to do what is right.
- We have the tendency to not listen to God.

8. What do we learn about God in this story? (Where in the story did you see this?)

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- God is interested in people's lives—He wants to interact with them.
- God punishes sin. God is merciful.
- God knows all things.
- God provides a way for us to live with Him.
- God alone is good. God's ways are not our ways.

9. Who do you think you are most like in this story?

SCENE 2 | THE FLOOD

Story from Genesis 6–9

The number of humans on the earth grew rapidly. Not only did sin spread from Adam and Eve to their sons, but it spread from generation to generation.

Even though humans were created in God's image, everyone chose to disobey God. They constantly acted out in violence against each other. God saw that people's thoughts were completely evil all of the time. This broke His heart and made Him wish He had never created humans.

So God decided to start over. He said, "I will completely wipe out this human race that I have created. I am sorry I ever made them."

However there was one man, named Noah, who found grace in the eyes of God. Noah had a close relationship with God and was the only blameless man living on earth at that time. So God said to Noah, "I have decided to cover the earth with a flood, destroying everything alive. But I will give you a plan to keep you safe."

God then told Noah to build a large ark, giving him specific instructions about how big to make it and what it should be like. God said to him, "Make an ark from wood and seal it with tar, inside and out. Then build many decks and stalls for animals inside of it. I promise to keep you safe in this ark. Bring seven pairs of animals I have approved for sacrifices and one pair of each of the others. These animals will come to you to be kept alive. Remember, take enough food for your family and for all the animals."

So Noah did everything exactly as God told him to do. Just as God said, the floods came—water burst out from the earth, and rain poured from the sky. When the waters came, Noah and his family and all of the animals boarded the ark. As the waters rose,

the ark floated safely on the surface. The flood covered even the tallest mountains and all living creatures on the earth were destroyed except for those on the ark.

After forty days the rains stopped. Many months passed as the waters slowly began to dry up. For weeks, Noah sent out a dove to see if it could find dry land. Finally the dove returned with an olive leaf in its mouth. So Noah sent the dove out again, and when it didn't come back, he knew it was safe to return to land.

As soon as Noah came off of the ark, he built an altar, selected pure animals from every species, and sacrificed them to God as a symbol of thankfulness and worship.

God was pleased with Noah's sacrifice and said, "I will never again curse the earth, destroying all living things with a flood, even though people's thoughts and actions are bent toward evil from childhood." God blessed Noah and his sons, telling them to be fruitful and multiply, to have many children and once again fill the earth with people.

Then God told Noah and his sons, "I have put all animals under your control. You can use them for food, but you must never eat animals that still have their lifeblood in them. I will require the blood of anyone who takes another person's life. Life is in the blood, and all life belongs to me!"

God also said, "As a symbol of my promise I will hang a rainbow in the clouds. When I see the rainbow, I will remember the eternal covenant between God and every living creature on earth."

SCENE 2 DIALOGUE I THE FLOOD

10. Why did God flood the earth and destroy everything? Do you think He had good reasons for doing this?

11. Why were Noah and his family spared? What does it mean to be "blameless"? Was Noah sinless?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- The story tells us all humans have sinned . . . including Noah. Was Noah spared because he had a close relationship with God and did not try and place blame for his sins?

12. What did the evil, rebellion, and violence of all the people in the world lead to?

- Death!

13. What did Noah's obedience lead to?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Being saved by God. God provided a way for him to be saved.

14. What do the stories we have heard so far show us about what humans are like?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Since the fall of Adam and Eve, every person has been a sinner.

15. Does the world and people of Noah's day sound much different than today?

16. Have you ever met a person who lived their life PERFECTLY? Never did a selfish thing, ever?

17. From this story, how does God feel about humans?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Disappointment and anger at our corruption.
- Compassion: by saving the human race and making a promise not to destroy us again.
- God is committed to give us the best possible life—He always provides a way for us.

18. What does it mean to be fruitful? Fruitful for who? What does it look like to be fruitless?

19. Is your life prioritized for maximum fruitfulness? What stands in the way? How do you invest your time, talents, money, career?

20. What could you begin to do to be more fruitful in the way God intended?

21. What did God say to Noah about animals and their blood?

22. What did God say about murder and blood and life? Why is it important?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- All life belongs to God, and life is in the blood. It is God Himself who gives life. He requires that blood (life) be given back to Him when life is taken!

23. What does the story teach us about God?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- God is powerful—in control of the elements.
- God will never allow evil to remain in His presence.
- The flood is absolute confirmation that God always judges sin in all men.
- ALSO God is the source of all grace. He saved Noah and his family and ultimately the race!
- Before saving them, He warned them of the coming judgment, an act of grace, just like with Cain.
- He promised never to destroy the earth again, even though He knew man would continue to sin.

- God knew what was in the heart of every man. God knows all things.

EXTENDING THE DIALOGUE

FURTHER APPLICATION

27. If what we learned in this story about all humans is true, how does/should it affect your life?
28. How would it affect us as a community?
29. How would it affect others—our neighborhood, our city?

WALKING IT OUT

The Walking It Out Handout is a tool to help us engage the Story individually and with others during the week. This session alone is not nearly enough for someone to be saturated in the Story and begin living out the implications of the Story in everyday life with a community.

As you distribute them, point out a few key things from the handouts you as a leader have already found meaningful.

WALKING IT OUT . . .

WEEK 2 | SINFUL HUMANITY

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT . . .

- This week take note of how often you want something someone else has. Also watch for when you feel a strong desire to do something for others' approval.
- Think about your choices: Which choices in your life have led to “death” and separation, and which choices have you made that lead to “life” and relationship? Which of these choices were motivated by “self”?
- How easy is it to do the right thing, even when you know what's right, when you would rather do something else that would benefit you? What would it take to be motivated by God's plan for our lives instead of our own desires and what pleases us in the moment?

- Try and find one tangible thing you could do to bless another person this week. Do one thing that creates or restores beauty into the world. Start with something small, but tell another person what you did.

THINGS TO READ ABOUT . . .

Genesis 4-9 | Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/gen4-9>.

Hebrews 11:4–7 | “By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he was commended as righteous, God commending him by accepting his gifts. And through his faith, though he died, he still speaks... By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, in reverent fear constructed an ark for the saving of his household. By this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.”

1 Samuel 16:7 | “For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”

Romans 3:23 | “. . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Romans 6:23 | “The wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

God’s Covenant with Noah | A sermon by John Piper looking at the story of Noah and how it points forward to Jesus: <http://bit.ly/piper-noah>.

“Without Faith it Is Impossible to Please God” | John Piper unpacks Hebrews 11:4–7 (see above) and examines the nature of faith and why and how it pleases God: <http://bit.ly/piper-abel>.

Verses of the Bible to memorize (they’ll help you remember some big ideas from this week’s story):

Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. — 1 Samuel 16:7

The wages of sin is death. . . . — Romans 6:23 (Memorize the rest of this verse in week seven.)

WEEK 3 | A PEOPLE OF GOD

Before you begin . . .

BIG PICTURE

This is where we're going—the big ideas you want people to understand more deeply during this session.

- Our identity as the Family of God.
- God chose His people by grace (not by any merit of their own).
- God is looking for a family to trust Him—not trust in their own ways.
- The people He chose to work through were messy and sinful (His only choice given the condition of all humanity).

SET THE TRAINING TONE

You will not need to repeat this list every week, but be aware of these and reestablish the right tone as necessary.

- We are here to learn and change (not just a social time, but we also desire to grow closer and build community).
- Have fun, and keep things moving and participatory.
- Welcome a challenge from me or others in the group (give each other permission to challenge us—probe, ask questions, etc.).
- Strive to be honest and vulnerable, and we should honor that by keeping what is shared in confidence.
- We are going to try and answer questions as much as possible from within the Story found in the Bible. Everything we need to learn about God and humans can be found right here in His Story!

REVIEW LAST WEEK'S STORY

Last week . . . we learned all humans sin—chose themselves over God in their hearts. God looks at the heart, not just actions. God shows mercy and grace even while justly punishing human rebellion.

Last week . . . we saw that self and sin lead to separation and death, while obedience leads to life and relationship with God. God also says life is in the blood, and all life belongs to him.

Last week . . . we also discussed what it means that God has created and commanded us to be fruitful.

THE STORY & DIALOGUE

SCENE 1 | THE COVENANT

Story from Genesis chapters 11–18, 22, 26–50, and Exodus 1

Noah's descendants forgot about God and how He had spared them in the flood. They made plans to construct a great city out of brick.

They said, "Let's build a monument to ourselves that reaches to the heavens to show how great we are." God saw how people were gathering together to honor themselves instead of Him. At that time everyone on earth spoke the same language. So God gave people different languages to make it harder for them to join together in rebellion. Then He scattered them all over the earth.

A few generations later, God established a special relationship and a promise with a man named Abram. This special promise was called a covenant, representing the deepest of all agreements between two people.

God told Abram, "I want you to leave your country and your family and go to the land that I will show to you. I'll make you the father of a great nation and famous throughout history. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. The entire earth will be blessed through your descendants."

This was an amazing promise God was making. He was choosing to bless the entire earth through one family of people! There was just one problem: Abram's wife, Sarai, had not been able to have children, so how would the earth be blessed through their descendants? Not to mention that they were getting old. At that time Abram was about 75, and Sarai about 65!

God led Abram and his family to a land called Canaan. There God told Abram, "Look as far as you can see in every direction. I am giving this land to you and your descendants." This land of Canaan would now be called the "Promised Land."

Some time passed, and Abram and Sarai still did not have a child.

Abram asked God, "What good are all of your blessings if I don't even have a son? I am getting old, and soon I will have to give my inheritance to one of my servants." God replied to Abram, "No, you will have a son who will inherit everything I have promised you."

Then God took Abram out beneath the night sky and said, "Look into the heavens and count the stars, if you can. Your family will be like this—too many to count!" Abram believed what God said, so God called him "righteous" because of his faith.

More years passed, and Sarai became impatient with not having a child. She asked her servant, an Egyptian woman named Hagar, to be a surrogate mother for her. Abram agreed with this plan. Hagar became pregnant and gave birth to a boy named Ishmael. But Hagar and Sarai's relationship became strained. During Hagar's pregnancy, she began to despise Sarai. In return, Sarai treated her servant Hagar terribly. Eventually Hagar and Ishmael were sent away and not allowed to live with Abram's family.

When Abram was 99, God appeared to him again, saying, "I am the mighty God; serve me with your entire life and live purely. I will keep my covenant with you for many generations to come. I am changing your name to Abraham, which means 'father of many nations.' Remember this. I will always be your God, and you will always be my people." Then God added, "I am also changing your wife's name to Sarah, which means 'mother of many nations.' Very soon she will be blessed with a son. You are to name this son Isaac."

Both Abraham and Sarah laughed to themselves in disbelief of God's promise.

Abraham wondered, "How can I become a father at 100 years old? How can Sarah have a baby when she is almost 90?"

Sarah thought, "How could a worn-out woman like me have a baby? And my husband is even older than I am!"

Abraham asked God, "Would you pass on your blessing through my son Ishmael?" But God said, "Why did you laugh? Is anything too hard for me? About a year from now you will have a son. It is through Isaac I will pass on my blessing—not through your servant's child."

Sure enough a year later—exactly as God had said—Sarah gave birth to their first son, naming him Isaac, which means "laughter." The birth of Isaac was the beginning of God fulfilling the promise he made to Abraham. God desired for Abraham's descendants, called the Hebrews, to be a new kind of people who would show the world what it means to live in God's ways.

SCENE 1 DIALOGUE I THE COVENANT

Remember this is a dialogue, not a quiz. The "answers" below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

1. Why did God stop the people from building a monument to themselves?
2. What was God's relationship with Abraham like? Abraham with God?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Abraham trusted God—he believed God. When God made promises, he got up and left.

3. Where in the story did we see Abraham struggle to believe the promise?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Abraham thought he would have to give up his inheritance to one of his servants.
- Abraham and Sarah laughed at God's promise and thought, "How could this happen?"

4. In the story, God declared Abraham righteous because of his faith. What do you think it means to be "righteous"? Was Abraham without sin?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Only God always does what is good, right, and perfect, so only He is qualified to determine what is right and wrong, good and evil.
 - Abraham's righteousness means God declares him righteous (imputed by grace).
 - Abraham's righteousness means he's in a right relationship with God (being right).
 - Abraham's righteousness means he's rightly used by God (doing right).
5. Who ultimately should decide/declare the right use of our lives, talents, time, energy, etc.?
- God alone!
6. Who usually decides those things in your life?
7. What would it look like to start letting God decide the right use of your life? What would have to change?
8. What did God promise to Abraham in this covenant?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- To make him the father of a great nation, giving him many descendants.
 - To bless and protect him.
 - To bless all the nations of the earth through him.
9. What does this promise tell us about what God is like?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- God desires to bless all people.
 - God has chosen a family (nation) to be His blessing and to live in His ways. To show the world what He is like! A people blessed to be a blessing!
10. What does it mean for your life if you believe the fact that you were chosen by God and blessed to be a blessing?
- God will protect and bless His people.
11. Where in this story have we seen God begin to keep His promise to Abraham?

12. Where else in the Story so far have we seen God keep His promise (what He said has actually happened)?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Adam and Eve dying, Cain with sin crouching, Noah with the flood

13. Do you believe God ALWAYS keeps His promises?

14. When in your life have you MOST had to trust someone? How did that turn out?

EXTENDING THE DIALOGUE

FURTHER APPLICATION

18. If what we learned in this story about God calling a special family as His own people is true, how does/should it affect your life?

19. How would it affect us as a community?

20. How would it affect others—our neighborhood, our city?

WALKING IT OUT

The Walking It Out Handout is a tool to help us engage the Story individually and with others during the week. This session alone is not nearly enough for someone to be saturated in the Story and begin living out the implications of the Story in everyday life with a community.

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WALKING IT OUT . . .

WEEK 3 | A PEOPLE OF GOD

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT . . .

- How do you currently go about deciding what is right or wrong for your life? How might you change that process in light of the Story?
- When (if ever) in your life have you felt like God declared you “righteous”? What was the situation? What were you doing or not doing?
- Spend some time this week making a list of ways God has blessed you in your life: people, provision, work, health, talents, skills, etc. Then spend some time asking God how He would like you to use these blessings to be a blessing to others.
- What are some ways in your life and community you could further live out the reality that you are a part of God’s family?

THINGS TO READ ABOUT . . .

Genesis 11–18, 22, 26–50, and Exodus 1

Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/gen11-22> | <http://bit.ly/gen26-39> | <http://bit.ly/gen40-ex1>

Abrahamic Covenant, Genesis 12:1–3 | “Now the Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

Hebrews 11:8–19 | Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/heb11abe>.

John 1:12–13 | “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Romans 4:16–17 | “...it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written, ‘I have made you the father of many nations’...” Read or listen to the whole chapter online: <http://bit.ly/rom4>.

God’s Covenant with Abraham | A sermon by John Piper looking at how the sure and spectacular promises to Abraham apply to us: <http://bit.ly/piper-abe>.

Verses of the Bible to memorize (they'll help you remember some big ideas from this week's story):

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding." — Proverbs 3:5

"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." — 2 Corinthians 12:9

WEEK 4 | EXODUS AND LAW

Before you begin . . .

BIG PICTURE

This is where we're going—the big ideas you want people to understand more deeply during this session.

- God rescues His people from slavery/oppression from sin.
- God gives the law to show them how to live with Him as their God (the Law was given to the people once they were rescued from slavery, showing them how to live in freedom).
- God gives His chosen people a way to atone for their sins and live close to Him.
- They were to be a people who display God's glory to the nations
- They rebel again and live in their own ways—doing what was right in their own eyes (determining good and evil for themselves).

SET THE TRAINING TONE

You will not need to repeat this list every week, but be aware of these and reestablish the right tone as necessary.

- We are here to learn and change (not just a social time, but we also desire to grow closer and build community).
- Have fun, and keep things moving and participatory.
- Welcome a challenge from me or others in the group (give each other permission to challenge us—probe, ask questions, etc.).
- Strive to be honest and vulnerable, and we should honor that by keeping what is shared in confidence.

- We are going to try and answer questions as much as possible from within the Story found in the Bible. Everything we need to learn about God and humans can be found right here in His Story!

REVIEW LAST WEEK'S STORY

Last week . . . we saw that God chose a people to be in a special relationship with Him—to trust Him and not in their own ways. This was an act of grace—they did nothing to earn or deserve it. He chooses to work through messy sinful people (His only choice, given the state of humanity).

Last week . . . we learned that God made a covenant with Abraham to give him innumerable descendants and that his family would be blessed by God to be a blessing to the rest of the world—showing them all what He is like.

Last week . . . what really stuck with you from our last time together?

THE STORY & DIALOGUE

BRIDGE STORY

Years later this son, Isaac, had his own son named Jacob—his name was later changed to Israel—meaning “struggler with God.” The Hebrews would then be called the people of Israel after Jacob. Jacob had twelve sons. One of his sons, named Joseph, ended up living in Egypt. (Joseph’s story is an interesting one for another time. . . .) Joseph invited his family to join him to escape a horrible famine that covered all the land. While living in Egypt, the people of Israel grew into a large nation. After Joseph died, the King of Egypt, named Pharaoh, feared Israel because of their great numbers. He treated them horribly and made Israel his slaves. Their slavery lasted 400 years. But God promised He would bless His people. . . .

SCENE 1 | DELIVERANCE & THE INSTRUCTIONS

Story from Genesis 37–50, Exodus 1–2, 7–12, 19–20

God inspired a man named Moses to rescue the Israelites from slavery. He sent Moses to warn Pharaoh that terrible things would happen to the Egyptians if they didn’t release God’s people. Pharaoh was arrogant and didn’t listen, so God sent a series of horrible plagues to punish the Egyptians (but these plagues did not affect the Israelites).

God turned water to blood, filled the nation with frogs, gnats, and flies, killed livestock, covered people in boils, destroyed the land with hail and locusts, and brought great darkness over the land.

In spite of these horrific events, Pharaoh would not let the Israelites go. So God sent one more plague—a plague that would take the life of every firstborn person and animal in Egypt. However, God provided a way for the firstborn of Israel to be spared.

He instructed them to take a first-born male lamb without defect and sacrifice it to Him without breaking any of its bones. Then they were to take the blood from the lamb and put it on the doorposts of their homes. The people of Israel did what God told them to do.

At midnight God sent the death angel through Egypt, taking the life of all the firstborn but passing over the homes that had blood on their doorposts. The Egyptians wept over this tragedy and begged the Israelites to leave, releasing them from their slavery. Now Israel, a large nation of more than two million people, set out to return to the land God promised to Abraham.

Pharaoh wanted revenge, so he sent his armies after Israel to catch them and kill them. When the Israelites approached the Red Sea, they thought they were trapped by the waters and would be caught by the Egyptians. God split the waters so the Israelites could cross the river on dry ground. When Pharaoh's armies tried to cross behind them, God brought a huge wind that blew the waters back over them. The Egyptian army was completely wiped out!

Two months after leaving Egypt, the Israelites set up camp at the bottom of Mount Sinai. God descended onto the mountain in fire, and a thick cloud of smoke covered the mountain. God called Moses into His presence on the top of the mountain. There God spoke to him, saying, "Tell my people this, 'You saw how I carried you on eagles wings and rescued you from Egypt. Now if you obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my treasured people—a kingdom of priests—set apart to represent me.'"

When Moses came down the mountain, he told the people what God said.

They all agreed, "We will do everything that God asks us to do. No, really, we will follow all the commands." After that God gave Moses instructions on how the people could return to following His ways and live in freedom, a life lived close to God and under His protection. We call these instructions the Ten Commandments, which were God's basic rules for life:

"I am your God who rescued you from slavery in Egypt.
Put me above everything else. Do not worship other things.
Do not misuse or disrespect my name.
Remember to set aside a day each week to rest and worship me.
Honor your parents. Don't murder or steal or lie.
Do not sleep with anyone but your husband or wife—be faithful.
Don't lust after what others have—be satisfied with what I give you."

God gave Moses more instructions, called laws, to give to Israel. These laws gave specific details about things, such as how to treat neighbors and enemies, how to handle conflicts, what is fair punishment, when to work and rest, when to celebrate and worship, and what offerings are acceptable to God.

However, the people did not want to live within God's boundaries and rebelled again, calling these instructions a new kind of slavery. Even those who tried to obey these rules found they could not keep them perfectly.

Because God always does what is good, right, and perfect, He could not overlook their sins and the ultimate punishment for sin was death. A life must be given to pay for each person's disobedience. God loved His people, so He provided a way for them to substitute the life of an innocent animal in place of their own.

People would bring pure animals to God, asking Him to transfer their sins to the helpless animal. The animal was killed, and its blood was given in place of the guilty person.

This system of sacrifice continued for hundreds of years. Sacrifices for sins had to be given day after day, year after year. God accepted this, but only as a symbol of what was to come. He was preparing a final sacrifice that would pay for the world's sins once and for all.

SCENE 1 DIALOGUE | DELIVERANCE & THE INSTRUCTIONS

Remember this is a dialogue, not a quiz. The "answers" below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

1. How could the Israelites avoid the death of their firstborn?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- They had to kill a lamb that was firstborn, male, and perfect and put its blood on the door to their house.
- They had to go inside and hide behind the blood as the death angel passed through the land.
- God was the provider! Of course they would only do this if they believed God.

2. In what other place in the Story have we seen that the life (and blood) of an innocent animal was given for the sake of covering another person's sin?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- In the story of Adam and Eve when God made clothes for them from the skins of animals.

3. Why are the sacrifices and the blood important?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- God said sin and rebellion must be paid for. The wages of sin is death.
- Payment for sin is life. Life for life. The covenant with Noah teaches us that the life is in the blood. Blood (a life given) is the only way to pay for sin.

- God's holiness requires that sin and rebellion be dealt with or be removed from His presence.

4. What is a covenant? What was the covenant God was talking about? Who was it given to originally?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Abraham
- The people of Israel
- (Review elements of the original covenant promises.)

5. How do you think the Israelites could keep their side of the covenant?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Follow God's commands.
- Obey Him.

6. Do you think God would remove His covenant if they did not obey Him?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Partially—He may not bless them and protect them, but ultimately He chooses to save them to show how great He is, not basing this on how sinless they are.

7. What do you think God meant by saying, "You will be a kingdom of priests"?

- They were to be His "display people," showing the world what He is like.

8. What is the purpose of the commandments and laws?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- The Law was given to the people once they were rescued from slavery, showing them how to live in freedom, close to God—so they could live in covenant with Him.

9. Which of these commandments do you think is the hardest to keep?

- You may want to guide people to see the first of the Ten Commandments actually sums up the rest.

10. What do God's commandments and laws show us about Him?

- They show us that God wants to live in a close and grace-filled relationship with Him.

11. What is the result of following in God's ways?

SCENE 2 | THE KINGS & PROPHETS

Story from Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 2 Samuel, 2 Kings
Prophecies from 2 Samuel 7, Isaiah 7, 9, 40, 53, and 61, Psalm 22, Micah 5, and
Zachariah 12

After wandering the desert for forty years, God led the people of Israel to recapture the Promised Land from their enemies. God gave them many victories in battle and completely honored His promises to them—but the people rejected Him and worshipped false gods. This false worship led them into many other sins.

Because of their sin and disobedience, God removed His protection and allowed them to be overpowered and punished by foreign nations. When the people suffered they would come back to God and beg for His help and forgiveness. God once again forgave them and sent leaders, called judges, to lead them in defeating their enemies. (These are not like judges we have today, but were more like generals). Battle after battle, Israel conquered their enemies at every border. In victory the people would worship God, but soon after the people turned away from God again and lived their own way.

Unfortunately, this became a pattern from generation to generation; the people of Israel would come to God and worship Him when they needed help, but when things were going well, they returned to worshipping other things. This was a time where everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

Since kings ruled other nations, the people of Israel complained to God, saying, “We want a human king we can see to rule over us.” God gave the people what they wanted and allowed them to be ruled by a succession of human kings that ultimately rebelled against God and His authority. Because of their rebellion, God removed His protection from Israel and allowed other nations to come in and conquer them. The Israelites were forced out of the Promised Land, and many were taken away to be slaves once again.

During the time of these kings, God sent prophets to be His messengers. God spoke through the prophets, calling people to return to His ways and follow His commandments. The prophets warned Israel of what would happen if they continued to rebel against God. Prophets also foretold of a new covenant God would make with His people. They pointed people to a coming Messiah, an eternal king who would fulfill this covenant, save them, and rule forever. God gave the prophets visions of what the Messiah would be like when He came.

Prophets like Isaiah foretold that . . .

- a virgin would give birth to Him in Bethlehem.
- He would be from the line of King David (their greatest King), who was a descendent of Abraham.
- He would do no wrong, living a life without sin.
- He would be beaten, killed, and buried in a rich man’s tomb.
- His life would be made an offering for our sin.

- He would establish a kingdom like no other Israel had ever known.
- He would fulfill every promise God had made to Abraham, Isaac, and their descendants.
- God will lay the punishment and guilt for all of our sins on Him. His life will be made an offering for us.
- because of Him, many will be made right with God.

Despite the warnings of the prophets, the people of Israel stopped listening to God, and God did not speak to humans again for 400 years.

SCENE 2 DIALOGUE | THE KINGS & PROPHETS

Remember this is a dialogue, not a quiz. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

12. What, to you, are the most striking characteristics of the history of the Israelites?

13. What is the pattern the Israelites got into?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- They trusted in themselves instead of God, determining good and evil for themselves.
- When it got them into trouble they cried out to God . . . and He saved them.
- Then they went back to doing what was right in their own eyes. They followed other gods after all He had done for them.

14. In what ways can you relate to this pattern the Israelites lived in?

15. How quick are you to question or submit to authority in your life? Are you quicker to assume your own authority? Why or why not?

16. Overall, how has it worked throughout the Story when humans have not obeyed God’s commands and lived for themselves?

17. How often does our world or culture justify things for personal comfort?

- Abortion and euthanasia

18. Who saved them from slavery initially and then over and over again?

- God!

19. From all of the stories so far, what have you learned about God?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- God is holy—God will never allow evil to remain in His presence.

- He always does what is good, right, and perfect.
- He never treats man unjustly.
- He judged Lucifer and the fallen angels by casting them out of heaven.
- He cast Adam and Eve out of the garden.
- He cast Cain away from His presence by making him a wanderer.
- He destroyed the earth with a flood.
- He thoroughly judged Egypt.
- He also judged Israel through enslavement and deportation when they followed false gods.
- He has all power.
 - He created everything, including the angels.
 - He created man and fashioned the earth for him to live on.
 - He destroyed all men and animals by the flood.
 - He caused barren women to become pregnant.
 - He destroyed the most powerful nation, Egypt, and the most powerful king, Pharaoh, easily.
 - He has complete control over His creation: He can turn the Nile to blood, cause storms greater than ever known in history, bring in insects to eat all the crops, cause day to be night, and even divide the waters of the Red Sea. He controls the wind and the waves!
 - He controls the nations; when Israel disobeyed, He could bring in a foreign power to enslave them.
- He knows all things.
 - He knew what Lucifer was thinking in his heart.
 - He knew Adam and Eve had sinned.
 - He knew Cain was about to do evil.
 - He knew the thoughts and intentions of every person on the earth.
 - He knew Sarah would have a baby.
 - He knew Joseph would save his family from drought.
- He is the source of all grace.
 - He did not destroy Lucifer.
 - He did not kill Adam and Eve instantly.

- Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.
- He called Abraham and promised to make him a great nation and to bless all the nations of the world through him.
- He gave Sarah a son in her old age.
- He told Moses how the firstborn could be saved at the Passover.
- He made a way for the Israelites' sins to be forgiven through the blood of sacrifices so they could dwell with Him.
- He sent judges, kings, and prophets to give the people His word.
- He promised a coming king who would establish save the people from all of their sins.
- God declares the “right-use-ness” of His people.
- He always keeps His promises.
 - He told Adam and Eve if they ate of the fruit He forbid that they would die.
 - He promised to bring a flood, and He did.
 - He promised a son to Abraham and Sarah, and they conceived.
 - He promised to make Abraham into a great nation, and it came true.
 - He promised to deliver His people from Egypt, and He did.
 - He promised to save the firstborn if the blood of a lamb was applied, and He did.
 - He promised to give the descendants of Abraham the land of Canaan, and He did.
 - He promised a coming messiah and savior . . . but will He come?

EXTENDING THE DIALOGUE

Look at Psalm 81 together.

20. What parts of the Story we looked at today are you reminded of when we read this Psalm?

21. What questions do you have?

22. What image of God do you get from this Psalm (song)? His desires for His people?

FURTHER APPLICATION

23. If what we discussed today is true, how does/should it affect your life?

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.

24. How would it affect us as a community?

25. How would it affect others—our neighborhood, our city?

WALKING IT OUT

The Walking It Out Handout is a tool to help us engage the Story individually and with others during the week. This session alone is not nearly enough for someone to be saturated in the Story and begin living out the implications of the Story in everyday life with a community.

As you distribute them, point out a few key things from the handouts you as a leader have already found meaningful.

WALKING IT OUT . . .

WEEK 4 | BEGINNINGS & SEPARATION

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT . . .

- Where in your life has God rescued you from your own “slavery” or decisions? How did you respond to Him after He did this?
- Has the pattern of your life ever followed the pattern the Israelites got into? What could you do to see this pattern stop?
- Spend some time this week thinking about what each of the Ten Commandments teach you about what God is like. (Read or listen to Exodus 20:1–17 online: <http://bit.ly/ten>.)
- What did you learn from this week’s story about determining right or wrong for your life and how to live in God’s ways? How can you know?
- In what ways does your life currently display to others what God is truly like? (This is what you were created to do!) In what ways does it not?

THINGS TO READ ABOUT . . .

Tons of the Bible

Much more than you could easily read in a week—the story comes from the books of Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 2 Samuel, and 2 Kings.

Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/deut> | <http://bit.ly/joshua> | <http://bit.ly/2sam> | <http://bit.ly/2kings>.

Prophecies from 2 Samuel 7, Isaiah 7, 9, 40, 53, and 61, Psalm 22, Micah 5, and Zachariah 12

Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/prophecies>.

The Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 | Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/ten>>

Proverbs 14:12 | “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.”

Romans, which mentions law more than 50 times | From chapter seven: “If it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, ‘You shall not covet.’ But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. . . . The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me.”

Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/romans>.

“Talking About Idolatry in a Postmodern Age” | Tim Keller discusses the struggle between true faith and idolatry as the main way to understand the whole Bible and a good way to explain faith to our culture: <http://bit.ly/keller-idols>.

Verses of the Bible to memorize (they’ll help you remember some big ideas from this week’s story):

“You shall have no other gods before me.” —Genesis 20:3

“It is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.” —Leviticus 17:11

WEEK 5 | THE PERSON OF JESUS

Before you begin . . .

BIG PICTURE

This is where we're going—the big ideas you want people to understand more deeply during this session.

- Identity as a learner and servant.
- Born of a virgin (human).
- Baptized (identified with sinful humanity).
- Led by the Spirit (Spirit-empowered).
- Tempted (victorious over temptation, lived a sinless life).
- Perfect man (He did what Adam didn't do by overcoming the tempter and living a life of faith—perfect submission and obedience to the Father).

SET THE TRAINING TONE

You will not need to repeat this list every week, but be aware of these and reestablish the right tone as necessary.

- We are here to learn and change (not just a social time, but we also desire to grow closer and build community).
- Have fun, and keep things moving and participatory.
- Welcome a challenge from me or others in the group (give each other permission to challenge us—probe, ask questions, etc.).
- Strive to be honest and vulnerable, and we should honor that by keeping what is shared in confidence.
- We are going to try and answer questions as much as possible from within the Story found in the Bible. Everything we need to learn about God and humans can be found right here in His Story!

REVIEW LAST WEEK'S STORY

Last week . . . we saw God lead His chosen people, Israel, out of horrible slavery in Egypt. He gave them instructions (laws) on how to live close to Him, in freedom, in a

covenant relationship. He summed up these laws in ten commands, with the first being all-encompassing:

Put me (God) above everything else. Do not worship other things.

Last week . . . the people of God continued to rebel against Him, calling these laws a new kind of slavery. But He loved His people, and God gave them a system of sacrifice where they could substitute the life and blood of an innocent animal in place of their own life—the payment required for rebellion against God. God accepted this, but only as a symbol of what was to come.

Last week . . . the people would come to God and worship Him when they needed help, but when things were going well, they returned to worshipping other things. This was a time where everyone did what was right in their own eyes. God foretold through prophets of a coming savior, a messiah who would save the people once and for all.

What are one or two big takeaways for you from last week?

THE STORY & DIALOGUE

SCENE 1 | THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Story from Matthew 1–2 and Luke 1–2

Four-hundred years passed since God had spoken to His people. The Israelites, called Jews, had been under the control of other nations for hundred of years. They were now ruled by Rome, the most powerful empire the world had ever known. The Jews were still waiting and hoping for a king who would come to save them and lead them into victory.

Finally God sent an angel to a young woman named Mary in the town of Nazareth. She was engaged to marry a man named Joseph who was a descendant of King David—a direct descendant of Abraham's.

The angel told Mary she would become pregnant and give birth to God's Son—even though she was still a virgin! The angel revealed this child in her was from the Holy Spirit and would become a king whose kingdom would never end!

Sure enough, the next year Mary gave birth to a son, whom they named Jesus, which means "the Lord is salvation." Not only did God reveal to Mary and Joseph that this boy was the long-awaited Messiah King, but He revealed it to others, too. Angels shouted the news to shepherds who then ran into town to find the baby Jesus and tell everyone the amazing news! A star guided wise men from distant lands to come and worship and bring gifts to this newborn king. This birth was truly a miracle!

Jesus grew up in both height and wisdom and was loved by God and everyone who knew Him.

SCENE 1 DIALOGUE | THE BIRTH OF JESUS

Remember this is a dialogue, not a quiz. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

1. What was unique about Jesus’ birth?
2. Who was Jesus a descendant of? How might this be significant?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- King David/Abraham.
- Covenant being fulfilled.
- Prophecy fulfilled.

3. What else did you hear in this story that reminds you of what the prophets said about the messiah?

- Born of a virgin in Bethlehem/Nazareth.

4. Why might these things be important?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- His human, virgin birth shows that He is a human. It was predicted by the prophets that this would be true of the Messiah.

5. What does Jesus name mean? “The Lord is salvation.”

Guide the conversation toward defining . . .

- Lord. Lord of whom and what?
- What is salvation? For whom, from what? To what?

SCENE 2 | BAPTISM

Story from Matthew 3, Mark 1, Luke 3, and John 1

God sent a messenger named John to tell people to get ready because the Messiah was coming. John was a distant cousin of Jesus, born just six months before Him. He was a rugged man who lived in the wilderness, ate locusts and wild honey, and wore clothes made out of camel hair. John boldly challenged the Jews, “Don’t just say you love God—prove it with your life. Turn from your sins and turn to God!”

He became known as John the Baptizer as he dunked those who had confessed their sins in the Jordan River. Baptism was a symbol of being washed clean from your sins and choosing a new way of living. When Jewish leaders asked John if he was the

Messiah, he responded, “No! But someone is coming soon who is far greater than me—I’m not worthy to untie His sandals or even to be His slave. You see . . . I baptize with water, but He will baptize with God’s Spirit!”

Soon after that Jesus came to be baptized. When John saw Him, he said, “I’m the one who needs to be baptized by you.” Jesus insisted, though, so John baptized Him in front of the crowds. When Jesus came out of the water, God’s Spirit came down from the sky—it looked like a dove floating down and resting on Him. Then a voice from heaven said, “You are my son, whom I love—you bring me great joy!”

SCENE 2 DIALOGUE | JESUS’ BAPTISM

6. What do we learn about John from this scene?

7. What was John’s message?

8. Why were people coming to be baptized by John?

- What did the story say?

9. What is significant about God saying to Jesus, “This is my son, whom I love . . .”?

- Declaring Jesus is His son—Son of God!

10. What is God affirming for everyone publicly?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Jesus’ identity!

SCENE 3 | JESUS’ TEMPTATION

Story from Matthew 4 and Luke 4

Immediately after being baptized, Jesus was led by God’s Spirit to go into the wilderness. There Satan tempted Him for forty days and forty nights. During that entire time Jesus didn’t eat anything and became very hungry. Satan tried to deceive Jesus, saying, “If you’re God’s Son, why don’t you turn these rocks into loaves of bread to eat?”

Jesus answered him, “No! When God spoke to Moses, he said, ‘People need more than bread to live—they must find their life in the words of God.’”

Then Satan took Jesus to the top of the tallest building in Jerusalem and said, “If you are God’s Son, jump off! Your sacred writings say, ‘God will send his angels to catch you and you won’t even hit the ground!’”

Jesus replied, “Moses also wrote, ‘Do not even try to test God.’”

Next, Satan took Jesus to the peak of a huge mountain. He showed him all of the nations of the world in their brilliance. He said, "I will give you all of this—anything you want—If you'll kneel down and worship me."

Jesus responded, "Get away from me, Satan! It's commanded, 'Put God above everything else and only worship him!'"

Then Satan went away and angels came and took care of Jesus. At this time He was about thirty years old. Throughout Jesus' life He never sinned or rebelled against God. He always chose to do what was good and right and perfect.

SCENE 3 DIALOGUE | JESUS' TEMPTATION

11. In your own words, what was Satan tempting Jesus with?

There are clues to this answer in how Jesus responds to each of Satan's temptations:

- To trust in His own provision for Himself—but God is the true provider. God is good, so we don't have to look elsewhere.
- To test His faith/relationship with God—but God alone is trustworthy. God is great, so we don't have to be in control.
- To gain Jesus' worship, away from God—but God alone is worthy to be worshipped. (Where in the Story have we seen Satan try to do this before?) God is glorious, so we don't have to fear others.

12. In your own words, what was Satan tempting Jesus with?

- There are clues to this answer in how Jesus responds to each of Satan's temptations.

13. How did Jesus respond in this scene to Satan's temptations? How is it different from Adam?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Resisted and quoted God's words to Satan

14. What is Satan challenging when he asks Jesus, "If you're the son of God . . . do this"?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- His identity

15. Where have we seen Satan challenge a person and tempt him or her before? Did he challenge Eve's identity too?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- “God just knows you will be like Him if you eat. . . .” They were created in God’s image—to be like Him!
- Satan’s scheme is always the same here: Twist God’s original words around and challenge our identity in God.

16. What are your thoughts about the part of the Story where it said:

- “Jesus never sinned or rebelled against God. He always chose to do what was good and right and perfect”?

17. From what we have seen and learned about humans so far, have we ever seen this before?

18. Have humans done well at managing good and evil, right and wrong?

- But Jesus is a human . . . how could this be possible!? Only God does what is good, right, and perfect. Only God has the ability to manage good and evil perfectly. Jesus would have to be God. He is God’s son—both God and man.
- Share this: Even though He was sinless, Jesus was baptized to identify with sinful humanity.

19. How well do you do at always choosing what is good and right and perfect?

20. What do you think enabled Jesus to do this—live this way perfectly?

SCENE 4 | DISCIPLES

Story from Matthew 4, Mark 1, and Luke 5

Not long after that, John saw Jesus coming toward him and yelled out, “Look! There is God’s Passover Lamb—He’ll take away the sins of the world! God showed me He’s the Messiah we’ve been waiting for—God’s own Son!”

As Jesus walked along the sea he told some of John’s followers, “Come and follow me!”

From then on Jesus surrounded Himself with a few close followers, called disciples, showing them how to live in the ways of God. Then Jesus traveled throughout the area meeting in market places, homes, and Jewish synagogues, teaching people God’s ways. He brought a new message to them, saying, “The Kingdom of God has come—now turn from your sins and turn to God!”

Full of the Spirit’s power, Jesus healed people with every kind of sickness and disease. News spread quickly about Him, and huge crowds began following Him wherever He went. People traveled from miles away to be near Him and see the amazing miracles He performed.

SCENE 4 DIALOGUE | DISCIPLES

21. Why did John say, “Look! There is God’s Passover Lamb”?

22. What do you think the people thought of when he said this? What are the implications of this claim about who Jesus is? What details do you remember about the first Passover lamb from our previous stories?

23. Where in the Story today did we see God's Spirit (the Holy Spirit) mentioned?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Mary becomes pregnant through the work of the Spirit
- At Jesus' baptism
- The Holy Spirit led Jesus out into the wilderness to be tempted
- Jesus did His miracle by the power of the Holy Spirit.

24. Where do you think Jesus got his power to do miracles?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- The Spirit of God that had descended on Him: the Holy Spirit.

25. What do we learn about the Holy Spirit from all of this?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- The Father sent the Spirit.
- The Spirit has power and leads Jesus.

26. What do we learn about Jesus from this story (all four scenes)?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Jesus humbled Himself.
- He is God and man.
- God called Him His son whom He loves.
- He never rebelled against God, living a sinless life.
- He has amazing powers.
- People wanted to be near Him.
- He taught in new ways.

EXTENDING THE DIALOGUE

FURTHER APPLICATION

30. If what we learned today about Jesus is true, how does/should it affect your life?

31. How would it affect us as a community?
32. How would it affect others—our neighborhood, our city?

WALKING IT OUT

The Walking It Out Handout is a tool to help us engage the Story individually and with others during the week. This session alone is not nearly enough for someone to be saturated in the Story and begin living out the implications of the Story in everyday life with a community.

As you distribute them, point out a few key things from the handouts you as a leader have already found meaningful.

WALKING IT OUT . . .

WEEK 5 | THE PERSON OF JESUS

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT . . .

- Look at the three ways Jesus was tempted by Satan. Where in your life are you tempted in the same ways?
 1. He was tempted to trust in His ability to provide for His own needs apart from the Father.
 2. He was tempted to doubt God and not trust Him.
 3. He was tempted to worship self or other things instead of God.
- Spend some time this week noticing what tempts you to be your own God and trust in yourself. Do you see any patterns here? Share this with a friend and discuss why this might be.
- How often do you consciously depend on God's Spirit at work in you for strength, power, and wisdom? Do you have God's Spirit?
- Think about what it would be like to live the rest of your life without ever sinning. Is this possible? Why or why not?
- What parts of Jesus' life and character do you wish were more true of you today?

THINGS TO READ ABOUT . . .

Beginnings of the Gospels according to Matthew, Luke, and John | Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/mat1-4> | <http://bit.ly/luke1-4> | <http://bit.ly/john1>.

“The Word Became Flesh” | John Piper discusses the Incarnation in John 1—from an invisible God, to the law, to Jesus living among us, to Jesus revealing God to us, to God giving us grace. Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/piper-word-flesh>.

“Who Is This Jesus?” | A talk by Tim Keller looking at Jesus’ claim to be God and our possible responses. Listen online: <http://bit.ly/keller-who-is-jesus>.

“On the Incarnation” | A classic by Athanasius of Alexandria written around 335 to defend the biblical idea that Jesus is God. Read the entire book, with an intro by CS Lewis, online: <http://bit.ly/ath>

“The Spirit-Led Are the Sons of God” | John Piper unpacks a section of Romans 8 and what it means to be led by the Spirit. Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/piper-spirit-led>.

Doctrine of the Holy Spirit | A handout Abe Meysenburg put together for a talk at a Soma men’s retreat. Read it online: <http://bit.ly/abe-hs>.

Verses of the Bible to memorize (they’ll help you remember some big ideas from this week’s story):

“The Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.’” —Luke 3:22

“We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” —Hebrews 4:15

WEEK 6 | THE WORKS OF JESUS

Before you begin . . .

BIG PICTURE

This is where we're going—the big ideas you want people to understand more deeply during this session.

- Miracles (affirming Jesus' deity and power).
- Kingdom teachings—Jesus is the perfect human KING who came as a humble servant.
- Showing the foretaste of the future—His life and teachings demonstrate and declare what the world should be like and will be like under His rule.
- Jesus' calling: I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life—to the Father and to restoration.
- God is a loving father who desires restoration with His children.

SET THE TRAINING TONE

You will not need to repeat this list every week, but be aware of these and reestablish the right tone as necessary.

- We are here to learn and change (not just a social time, but we also desire to grow closer and build community).
- Have fun, and keep things moving and participatory.
- Welcome a challenge from me or others in the group (give each other permission to challenge us—probe, ask questions, etc.).
- Strive to be honest and vulnerable, and we should honor that by keeping what is shared in confidence.
- We are going to try and answer questions as much as possible from within the Story found in the Bible. Everything we need to learn about God and humans can be found right here in His Story!

REVIEW LAST WEEK'S STORY

Last week . . . we looked at Jesus' birth and life—a humble life, human in every way, tempted in every way, just like us. But Jesus lived His life without ever sinning or losing trust in His Father, God. Jesus found His very life and identity in and from His Father.

Last week . . . we also saw Jesus filled and empowered to do miraculous things by the Holy Spirit.

Last week . . . we also learned the names given to Jesus at His birth: Jesus—the Lord is salvation and Immanuel—God with us. These names showed us a lot about why He came to earth and who He is.

THE STORY & DIALOGUE

SCENE 1 | MIRACLES

Story from Luke 3, John 1, and Mark 2–5

Crowds followed Jesus wherever He went as He performed many miracles and healings. He cast demons out of people, and the demons shuddered in fear before Jesus. His teaching and miracles concerned the local Jewish leaders; they were not comfortable with some of Jesus' unusual methods.

One time when Jesus was teaching He told a paralyzed man, "Don't worry; your sins are forgiven." When some local religious leaders questioned Jesus on who gave Him the authority to forgive sins, saying God alone can forgive sin, Jesus proved His authority to them by healing the man completely!

Another time, Jesus was exhausted after teaching all day. He suggested that He and the disciples get into a boat and go to the other side of the sea. A fierce storm came up suddenly. No matter how hard they tried, his disciples couldn't keep the boat from filling with water and went to Jesus in a panic.

Jesus stood up and said to the wind and waves, "Quiet. Be still now." The wind stopped blowing, and the sea became calm. When the disciples saw this they looked at each other and said, "Who is this man that even the wind and the waves obey Him?"

On several occasions Jesus raised people from the dead. Once as Jesus was traveling He was asked to go to the home of a man named Jairus whose daughter was very sick. While on the way to their home, news arrived that the girl had already died. Jesus continued on, and when He arrived at Jairus' home there was a crowd of people inside weeping loudly. Jesus asked them, "Why are you crying? The girl is not dead—she's sleeping." The crowd laughed at Him. When they went into the girl's room, Jesus took the girl's hand and said, "Little girl, get up!" Immediately the girl jumped out of bed and began walking around! Jesus told them to give her something to eat. Her parents were absolutely amazed!

After spending an entire night in prayer, Jesus chose twelve men out of all of His followers to be His apprentices, calling them apostles. They traveled with Jesus wherever He went as He taught them to live in the ways of God. He sent the apostles out to heal the sick, to teach others what they had learned, and to share the message of the Kingdom of God.

SCENE 1 DIALOGUE | MIRACLES

Remember this is a dialogue, not a quiz. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

1. Did God create humans to live forever?
2. From what we’ve learned from the Story so far, why do people die?
3. Who gave man His life?
4. Who do you think has the power to raise people from the dead?
5. If Jesus has the authority to forgive sin, has power over creation, has authority over demons, and can raise the dead back to life, then who do you think He is?
6. What are your thoughts about all of this?

SCENE 2 | THE KINGDOM

Story from Matthew 5, 7, 10, 13, 18–20; Mark 3–6, 10, 13; Luke 6, 8–10, 12–15, 17; John 3

Jesus continued to teach people, “The Kingdom of God has come—turn from your sin and self and turn to God!”

One day He climbed a hill with a group of His closest followers. They sat down together, and Jesus began to teach them about God’s Kingdom.

He said, “God blesses those who realize their need for Him; the humble and poor, the gentle and merciful—the Kingdom of God belongs to them. God blesses the pure in heart and those who hunger and thirst to be with Him.”

Then Jesus went on to teach about God’s laws that were given to Moses.

Jesus said, “Don’t think I came to get rid of the laws of Moses and the writings of the Prophets. I have come to fulfill them!” He taught them, “The laws and commands tell you not to murder, but I say if you hate someone or insult them you are just as guilty as a murderer. Your words and actions bring judgment on you.”

“The laws also tell us to never have sex with someone else’s spouse. But I say anyone who even looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery in his heart.” He also taught them, “If someone steals your shirt from you, offer them your coat too. Live generously! Love your enemies. Anyone can love their friends, but you are to love the unlovable. You must live differently, doing what is good, right, and perfect—just like God your Father.”

The people were amazed at Jesus’ teaching; He had real power and authority—unlike their teachers of the law.

{Pause for a moment.}

Jesus continued to teach about the Kingdom of God using short stories that had powerful meanings, called parables. He said, “The Kingdom of God is like a tiny seed that is planted in a field. This seed may be small at first, but it grows into a large tree where birds can come and find shelter.”

Jesus told dozens of stories like this to the crowds.

He said the Kingdom is . . .

- Like a hidden treasure buried in a field—worth diligently searching for.
- Like yeast spread in a large ball of dough—just a little will change a lot.
- Like a precious pearl—worth trading everything for.
- Like a great feast—where the poor, the forgotten, and the outcast all get invited, and on and on. . . .

Jesus was asked, “When is this ‘Kingdom’ that you are teaching about going to come?” Jesus replied, “The Kingdom of God is not something you can predict. People will not say, ‘Here it is,’ or, ‘There it is,’ because the Kingdom of God is within you.”

“Do not let all of this bother you. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms and I am going there to prepare a place just for you. You know the way to the place where I am going.”

One of Jesus’ followers asked Him, “Lord, how can we be with you if we do not know the way?”

Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes back into a close relationship with the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father too. From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him in me.”

People were astonished at Jesus’ teaching and wisdom. They understood some of these pictures, but others remained a mystery to them.

{Pause for a moment.}

One night a Pharisee named Nicodemus came to Jesus and said, “Rabbi, we know you were sent by God to teach us. Your miracles have proven to us that God is with you.” Jesus replied, “You’re right—but unless someone is born a second time they will never understand God’s Kingdom.”

“What do you mean?” Nicodemus questioned. “How can someone who is fully grown climb back inside their mother and be born a second time?”

Jesus answered him, “The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless they have been born a second time by God’s Spirit. Humans can only give human life, but God’s Spirit gives new life in the Kingdom.”

“How can this happen!?” Nicodemus asked.

Jesus replied, “You are a respected Jewish teacher, but you don’t know this simple truth? If you won’t believe me when I teach you about everyday things, how will you believe me when I tell you about God’s Kingdom?”

“What I am telling you is true,” Jesus continued. “God showed His great love for people by sending me—His only son—to this world. Anyone who believes in me and lives in my ways will find life that is complete and eternal! He sent me here to save people—not to judge them. Those who want to live in sin and darkness will reject me and bring God’s judgment on themselves. But those who want to live in God’s ways will trust me and live forever!”

SCENE 2 DIALOGUE I THE KINGDOM

Remember this is a dialogue, not a quiz. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

7. What do you think the Kingdom of God is? Where is it?
8. Why is it so hard to describe?
9. How does someone “enter the Kingdom of God” according to this story from the Bible?
10. What do we learn about Jesus from these stories?
11. Is His Kingdom like that of the human kings we heard about earlier in the stories?
 - No—Jesus is the perfect human King. He always does what is good, right, and perfect. He is the true King the people always wanted!
12. What would the world be like if everyone lived in the Kingdom under God’s rule, care, and protection?
13. What do you think is the connection between living in God’s ways and believing in Jesus?
14. In your own words, what is Jesus teaching His followers in this scene?

SCENE 3 | THE LOST SON

Story from Luke 15:11–32

Jesus told them another parable about a father and his sons. “There was once a man who had two sons. The younger said to his father, ‘I want my inheritance right now—give me what’s coming to me!’

“So the father divided the property between the sons. It wasn’t long before the younger son packed his bags and left for a distant country. There, undisciplined and self-indulgent, he wasted everything he had on partying and prostitutes. After he had gone through all his money he ended up homeless and hungry. He got a job with a farmer who assigned him to his fields to feed the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten the corncocks in the pig slop, but no one would give him any.

“That brought him to his senses. He said, ‘All those farmhands working for my father sit down to three meals a day, and here I am starving to death. I’m going back to my father. I’ll tell him I’ve sinned against God; I’ve sinned before my father. I don’t deserve to be called his son. I’ll ask him to take me on as a hired hand.’ He got right up and went home to his father.

“When he was still a long way off, his father saw him. His heart pounding, he ran out, embraced him, and kissed him. The son started his speech: ‘Father, I’ve sinned against God, and I’ve sinned before you. I don’t deserve to be called your son ever again.’

“But the father wasn’t listening. He was calling to the servants, ‘Quick. Bring the best robe and dress him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Then get a grain-fed heifer and roast it. We’re going to feast! We’re going to have a wonderful time! My son is here! It is like he was dead, and now he’s alive! He was lost, but now he is found!’ And they began to have a wonderful time.”

SCENE 3 DIALOGUE | THE LOST SON

Remember this is a dialogue, not a quiz. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

15. Why doesn’t the father punish the son?
16. Why does he put the family ring on his finger?
17. What are they celebrating? The son did nothing but sin. Does he deserve forgiveness and a celebration?
18. Who does this father remind you of?
19. What would happen to you if your life was saved in this way?
20. The Parable of the Lost Son is a picture of what is called the gospel. After hearing this story, how would you explain the gospel?

[Resting Slide]

EXTENDING THE DIALOGUE

USING MEDIA

Use of songs or artwork for further discussion . . .

Les Miserables

Clip of the bishop with Jean Val Jean

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-KRbQFtQ0w>

21. Why does the bishop say, “I know who you are”?

- He is identifying with him.

22. Why does the bishop say “How do you know I’m not going to murder you”?

- He knows his own heart is as evil as Jean Val Jean’s.

23. How does the bishop demonstrate he believes the gospel? “My brother . . .”

24. Are you asking yourself how you can be like the bishop or like Jean Van Jean?

- You become like the bishop NOT by trying to be a good person or a “good Christian” but by IDENTIFYING with Jean Val Jean and his sinfulness.

25. What other thoughts or comments do you have about this clip? Is there anything you are wondering about?

FURTHER APPLICATION

26. If what we discussed today is true, how does/should it affect your life?

27. How should it affect us as a community?

28. How would it affect others—our neighborhood, our city?

WALKING IT OUT

The Walking It Out Handout is a tool to help us engage the Story individually and with others during the week. This session alone is not nearly enough for someone to be saturated in the Story and begin living out the implications of the Story in everyday life with a community.

As you distribute them, point out a few key things from the handouts you as a leader have already found meaningful.

WALKING IT OUT . . .

WEEK 6 | THE WORKS OF JESUS

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT . . .

- Think about the miracles Jesus performed. Is there anything in your life today that would be beyond His ability to manage or change?
- Spend some time this week noticing areas of your life where you can relate to the lost son in Jesus' parable. "I want what I want and I want it now!"
- Have you ever experienced the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of the father in the parable? The father is a picture of how God feels about you!
- What would life today be like if everything was the way God intended it to be? Jesus gave a foretaste of all of that as He lived His life and restored people and things.
- Ask God to show you what it means (or would mean) for your life to have Jesus show you "the way, the truth, and the life" that God always intended for you.

THINGS TO READ ABOUT . . .

Matthew 5, 7, 10, 13, 18–20 | Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/mat5->.

Mark 3–6, 10, 13 | Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/mark3->.

Luke 6, 8–10, 12–15, 17 | Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/luke6->.

John 3 | Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/john3>.

"Is the Kingdom Present or Future?" | Piper looks at several of Jesus' parables to answer this question. Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/piper-kingdom>.

“What's the difference between living for the Kingdom and living for the American dream?” I Piper deals with what drives us. Is it the King or something else? Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/piper-dream>.

“The Prodigal God” I Tim Keller explains why both sons in Jesus’ parable are lost for the same reason and what the father reveals about God. Read an excerpt online: <http://bit.ly/keller-prodigal> (and/or listen to a similar sermon: <http://bit.ly/keller-sons>).

The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming I A much-loved book by Henri Nouwen that uses a painting by Rembrandt and his own experiences to dig deep into the Parable of the Prodigal Son. Read an excerpt online: <http://bit.ly/nouwen>.

Verses of the Bible to memorize (they’ll help you remember some big ideas from this week’s story):

"Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." —John 14:6

"Jesus said. . . 'Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.'" —John 14:9

WEEK 7 | DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Before you begin . . .

BIG PICTURE

This is where we're going—the big ideas you want people to understand more deeply during this session.

- Substitutionary atonement—Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.
- Forgiveness of sins.
- Jesus is Lord over sin and death.
- Jesus is Lord over all!
- Is Jesus Lord over your life?

SET THE TRAINING TONE

You will not need to repeat this list every week, but be aware of these and reestablish the right tone as necessary.

- We are here to learn and change (not just a social time, but we also desire to grow closer and build community).
- Have fun, and keep things moving and participatory.
- Welcome a challenge from me or others in the group (give each other permission to challenge us—probe, ask questions, etc.).
- Strive to be honest and vulnerable, and we should honor that by keeping what is shared in confidence.
- We are going to try and answer questions as much as possible from within the Story found in the Bible. Everything we need to learn about God and humans can be found right here in His Story!

REVIEW LAST WEEK'S STORY

Last week . . . we looked at how Jesus lived His life. Everywhere He went crowds flocked to Him, and He performed many miracles, healing everyone who came to Him. We saw that Jesus has the authority to forgive sin, has power over creation, has authority over the demons, and can raise the dead back to life.

Last week . . . we also learned the Kingdom of God is a kingdom of the heart. And we saw that the only way to the Father is through Jesus.

Last week . . . we also saw a powerful picture of God as a loving Father who is waiting for His sinful children to come home so He can shower them with forgiveness and blessings.

Last week . . . what really stuck with you from our last time together?

THE STORY & DIALOGUE

SCENE 1 | DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Story from Matthew 26–28; Mark 14–16; Luke 22–24; John 13,17–20

Jesus and His disciples traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. Everywhere He went He had compassion on people and met their needs. The Pharisees and other Jewish leaders were becoming increasingly upset with Jesus and His claims.

He continued to tell people He could forgive their sins. This enraged the Jewish leaders—they saw this as the ultimate disrespect to God. They looked for ways to trap Jesus into saying something they could arrest Him for, but Jesus was too wise for them.

Many of His stories pointed out the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders. Jesus said, “When the Pharisees and teachers share with you God’s commands, listen to them—but don’t follow their example. They don’t live out what they teach.”

The high priest met with these leaders to discuss capturing Jesus and putting Him to death. “We can’t arrest him during Passover,” they agreed, “or it will create a huge riot.”

Jesus and His twelve disciples met together in a home to celebrate the Passover. During the meal Jesus picked up some bread, thanked God for it, and broke it into pieces. Giving it to His disciples He said, “Take this and eat it. This is my body given for you.”

Then Jesus picked up a cup of wine and thanked God for it. He gave them the cup and said, “All of you, drink this. It is my blood given for you—a new covenant between God and His people. It is poured out to forgive the sins of many. Remember me when you continue to eat and drink these things together.”

Jesus told them, “When you see what happens tonight you will all abandon me. It is part of God’s plan that I will be betrayed and die. But don’t fear; I will rise again from the dead!” He knew His disciple Judas would betray Him, bringing Jewish soldiers to capture Him later that night when no one was around.

After the meal, when it was dark, Jesus went to pray. Filled with pain and sorrow, He pleaded with God, “Father, if there is another way besides my death, please let that happen—but I will do whatever you ask.”

Just as He had finished praying, Judas showed up with an armed mob. He greeted Jesus with a kiss—a sign to show the guards which one they should arrest.

Jesus said to them, “Am I a dangerous criminal that you need weapons to capture me? Why didn’t you arrest me in the Temple where I’ve been teaching every day? No! This is part of God’s plan, just as the prophets predicted long ago.”

When the guards arrested Jesus and dragged Him away, the disciples ran away and hid. The guards beat Jesus and brought Him before the Jewish leaders for questioning.

They asked, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?”

Jesus answered, “I am, and you will see me seated next to God in power—coming back on the clouds of heaven.”

When Jesus said this, the high priest tore his clothing in horror and said, “Any man who claims to be God must be put to death.” Then they slapped Jesus in the face and spit on Him.

Jesus was brought to the Roman governor, Pilate, since Jews could not execute anyone without official approval. The Jewish leaders stirred up the crowds and pressured Pilate to have Jesus put to death. They shouted, “CRUCIFY HIM! CRUCIFY HIM!”

Pilate feared a riot would break out, so he handed Jesus over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified. Crucifixion was the most cruel and humiliating way to die. Jesus was brutally beaten and whipped by the soldiers. They put a crown of sharp thorns on His head and a purple robe around His shoulders. “Hail the King of the Jews!” they laughed. All night, the Roman soldiers continued to beat Jesus and mock Him.

When morning came, they led Jesus to a place called Skull Hill. Like a criminal, Jesus was nailed to a heavy wooden cross between two thieves. Hanging there, He cried out, “Father, please forgive them. They don’t know what they’re doing.”

At noon, darkness filled the skies—blocking the sun for three hours. Suddenly the thick curtain hanging in the Temple tore down the middle! At that moment Jesus shouted, “Father! I give you my life. . . . It is finished.”

Then Jesus breathed His last breath and died.

The soldiers broke the legs of the criminals crucified next to Jesus to speed up their death. When they found Jesus was already dead, they didn’t break His legs. To be sure, one of the soldiers stabbed Him in the side with a spear—blood and water poured out.

Late Friday afternoon, Jesus’ body was taken down from the cross, wrapped in long strips of cloth, and buried in a rich man’s tomb. A large stone was rolled over the entrance to the tomb, and Roman guards were posted to make sure nothing happened to His body.

{Pause for a moment.}

Early on Sunday morning, some of the women who followed Jesus went to prepare His body for burial. When they arrived at the tomb, they saw the stone rolled away, and the soldiers were gone!

Suddenly two angels appeared. They said, “Why are you surprised? You are looking for Jesus, but He is not here. He’s been raised from the dead.”

The women were excited but afraid and hurried to tell the disciples the amazing news. Some of them ran back to the tomb and looked inside for themselves. . . .

Jesus was not there!

In fact, Jesus appeared to His disciples many times throughout the next forty days. They touched Him, saw Him eat food, and saw Him perform miracles again. Jesus reminded them of His teaching about the kingdom and opened their minds to understand how the whole Story has led up to Him. More than 500 people saw him alive.

SCENE 1 DIALOGUE | DEATH AND RESURRECTION

Remember this is a dialogue, not a quiz. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

1. Why was Jesus going to Jerusalem? What do we know about this celebration?
2. How does the Passover story we heard earlier remind you of Jesus’ death?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Jesus is the Passover Lamb that takes away the sins of the world.

3. Why do you think the Jewish leaders want to kill Jesus?
4. What did Jesus mean when He said, “Take this and eat it. This is my body given for you” and “Drink this. It is my blood given for you—a new covenant between God and His people”?
5. What was God’s Old Covenant with His people? What do you think this “New Covenant” is?

- The covenant was originally given to Abraham: I will be your God, and you will be my people.
- I will be your God, AND I will enable you to be my people, to keep your end of the covenant. God will keep both sides of the new covenant.

6. Why do you think the curtain in the Temple tore in half? What did the curtain separate?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Sinful people from God and His presence.

7. How did Jesus fulfill the prophet's predictions about the coming Messiah? (Use this question only if you have time or people are questioning Jesus being the Messiah.)

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- He would fulfill every promise God made to Abraham, Isaac, and their descendants.
- He will be beaten, whipped, and wounded.
- He will be put on trial and thrown in prison.
- His hands and feet would be pierced.
- He will be killed like a criminal and then buried in a rich man's tomb.
- God will lay the punishment and guilt for all of our sins on Him.
- His life will be made an offering for us.
- Because of Him, many will be made right with God.

8. Do you remember what Jesus said when He was hanging on the cross?

You may have to remind them . . .

- Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they are doing!

9. How could Jesus possibly forgive those who were killing Him?

10. Do you believe God can forgive what you have done in your life?

11. Do you believe He has forgiven you?

12. How is Jesus being raised from the dead significant? What does it show us about Him?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- He conquered death—the results of human sin and rebellion! He didn't just exchange His life for ours to atone for our sins; He also secured new life for us!

13. From what we now know of Jesus and what He taught, how could humans be set free from the penalty of sin—set free from death and separation from God?

- By putting their faith and trust in the work of Jesus' death and resurrection on their behalf. To allow Jesus atone for their sins and exchange his righteousness for their unrighteousness.
- To move from a life lived determining right or wrong for ourselves and turning to God, through Jesus, trusting in His ways for our life.

We've spent the last seven weeks looking at this story; it is the true story. This is a story about a holy God who has pursued sinful and rebellious humans with the desire of restoring them to a close and loving relationship.

14. If that is NOT your story . . . what is your story?

- Is the story primarily about you or about God?
- Which story do you currently live by?

>> Pause here for a moment to reflect <<

EXTENDING THE DIALOGUE

We talked last week a lot about the Kingdom of God and that Jesus was the perfect king, the only king who always did was good, right, and perfect.

Another word the Bible uses for Jesus as king is Lord. In fact, the word LORD is used thousands of times referring to God and Jesus throughout the Bible.

Let's review some of what we have seen that Jesus is in fact King or Lord over:

SUMMARIZE JESUS'S LORDSHIP | WHAT IS JESUS LORD OVER?

Lord over Demons

All authority/dominion in Heaven and Earth is given to me (Matthew 28:18).

What does His Lordship over the demons mean for our lives?

Lord over Humanity

Jesus was the "Perfect Adam," the only perfect man!

What does His Lordship over humanity mean for our lives?

Lord of Righteousness

Because He perfectly did what we do not do (obey and submit to the Father), He sits as the righteous Judge. He declares what is righteous and is alone perfectly righteous so that makes Him the only perfect Judge as to right and wrong—what is righteous.

What does His Lordship over righteousness and judgment mean for our lives?

2 Cor. 5:20–21 "We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. He gives us His righteousness in exchange for our sin."

John Stott quote: “The essence of sin is we human beings substituting ourselves for God, while the essence of salvation is God substituting himself for us. We put ourselves where only God deserves to be; God puts himself where we deserve to be.”

John 12:46–48 “I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. If anyone hears my words and does not keep them I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. The one who rejects me and does not receive my words has a judge; the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day.”

What kind of judge is Jesus?

Gentle, loving, forgiving savior, but absolute—sin will be judged by Jesus’ words and commands.

Lord of Salvation

The only way to the Father through His sacrifice and offering

John 14:6 “Jesus answered, ‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”

What does His Lordship over salvation mean for our lives?

Lord over Sin and Death

In Him we can overcome sin and death.

What does His Lordship over sin and death mean for our lives?

We see that Jesus is Lord over ALL things and people!

Which area of Jesus’ Lordship that we just discussed is hardest for you to submit to?

The key question before us then is:

Is Jesus Lord over your life?

Do you submit to His reign and accept His righteousness in exchange for your unrighteousness?

This can begin today. You can receive His forgiveness for a life of self-rule and ask Jesus to be Lord and King in your life from this point forward. Ask Him to fill you with His own Spirit that will lead you into all the ways of truth.

WALKING IT OUT

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As you distribute them, point out a few key things from the handouts you as a leader have already found meaningful.

WALKING IT OUT . . .

WEEK 7 | DEATH AND RESURRECTION

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT . . .

- If you have never submitted to Jesus' Lordship over your life and exchanged His righteousness for your sin and unrighteousness, why? What is keeping you from accepting His amazing gift of salvation and offer to be King in your life? Ask God Himself to show you what is holding you back. During the week, try and talk to someone you trust about this. It is the most important decision you will ever make!
- Spend some time this week noticing which areas in your life you still act as if you are Lord. Why do you keep believing you need to rule in this area or circumstance?
- Meditate on the fact that if you have salvation through Jesus that you also have His new life—a life that will never end! How does/should this change your mindset and heart responses to everyday things?
- If you have put your trust in Jesus, then your sins are forgiven—all of them. For what sins in your life—now or from your past—do you need to begin to accept this forgiveness?
- If you believe you've been forgiven by God, let Him lead you to forgive others who have offended you. ("As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive," says Colossians 3:13.)

THINGS TO READ ABOUT . . .

Matthew 26–28 | Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/mat26-28>.

Mark 14–16 | Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/mark14-16>.

Luke 22–24 | Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/luke22-24>.

John 13,17–20 | Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/john13->.

“Who is This Jesus?” | Tim Keller looks at possible explanations of who Jesus is and what that means for us. Listen online: <http://bit.ly/keller-who>.

“Did You Kill the Lord of Glory?” | John Piper examines Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost and how God endorsed Jesus as Lord. Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/piper-kill>.

“Eight Reasons Why I Believe That Jesus Rose from the Dead” | By John Piper. Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/piper8>.

“The Gospel in All Its Forms” | Keller explains that like God, the gospel is both one and more than that. Read online: <http://bit.ly/keller-forms>.

Verses of the Bible to memorize (they’ll help you remember some big ideas from this week’s story):

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” — Romans 6:23

“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” — Romans 10:9

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” — John 3:16

WEEK 8 | THE MISSION AND POWER

Before you begin . . .

BIG PICTURE

This is where we're going—the big ideas you want people to understand more deeply during this session.

- Jesus' commission to make disciples/be His witnesses.
- Jesus is Lord of the mission.
- Disciples wait on the Holy Spirit.
- The Holy Spirit comes to live in disciples.
- Disciples are empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- The gospel is preached.
- Thousands respond, repent, and are baptized.
- A call here to affirm Jesus as Lord by being baptized in community (family).

SET THE TRAINING TONE

You will not need to repeat this list every week, but be aware of these and reestablish the right tone as necessary.

- We are here to learn and change (not just a social time, but we also desire to grow closer and build community).
- Have fun, and keep things moving and participatory.
- Welcome a challenge from me or others in the group (give each other permission to challenge us—probe, ask questions, etc.).
- Strive to be honest and vulnerable, and we should honor that by keeping what is shared in confidence.
- We are going to try and answer questions as much as possible from within the Story found in the Bible. Everything we need to learn about God and humans can be found right here in His Story!

REVIEW LAST WEEK'S STORY

Last week . . . we looked at Jesus' death and resurrection. We saw that Jesus is the Passover Lamb who takes away the sins of the world. He died as a substitute for us, taking our sins and punishment upon Himself. He came offering forgiveness, not judgment. But we also learned Jesus taught that people bring judgment on themselves by not obeying His teaching and commands.

Last week . . . we talked through Jesus' lordship. Jesus is Lord over:

Salvation . . . sin and death . . . righteousness . . . humanity . . . everything!

Last week . . . we ended with the question:

Is Jesus Lord over your heart and life?

THE STORY & DIALOGUE

STORY I THE MISSION AND POWER

Story from John 20, Matthew 28, John 14, Acts 2, and 1 Corinthians 15:3–8

In the weeks that followed Jesus' death, He appeared to His disciples many times and was seen by more than 500 eyewitnesses. Quickly the news about His resurrection spread throughout the land.

One of Jesus' disciples named Thomas said, "I won't believe He is alive unless I can put my fingers into the holes where His hands were nailed to the cross."

A few days later, Jesus appeared to His disciples and said to Thomas, "Put your fingers here—feel the hole in my hand. Put your hand into the wound on my side."

Thomas shouted, "It is you, Jesus—my God!"

Then Jesus said, "I will bless those even more who haven't seen, but still believe!"

Soon after that, Jesus met with His disciples over a meal. He said, "John baptized you in water, but in a few days you will be baptized with God's Spirit. This will give you power to live in my ways and tell the entire world about me."

Jesus commanded His disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, GO and make disciples of all the nations, all over the world. Baptize these new disciples in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey all the commands I have given you and to walk in my ways. Be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age. God's Spirit will come and live inside of you, giving you peace and leading you in all the ways of truth."

As the disciples watched, Jesus went up into the sky, disappearing in the clouds right in front of them!

{Pause for a moment.}

A few weeks later, a group of 120 of Jesus' followers, including His closest disciples gathered to pray together in Jerusalem. All of sudden, they heard a loud sound, like a roaring windstorm, that filled the house where they were meeting. Each of them was filled with God's Spirit and started speaking in languages not their own! They went out into the street and began to tell people about all Jesus had done.

This roaring sound was heard throughout the entire city, and a large crowd had gathered outside the house to see what was going on. At that time, Jews from all over the world were living in Jerusalem.

When the people heard Jesus' followers speaking, they said, "How can this be? They're from Galilee, but they're speaking in our own languages. This is amazing!"

One of Jesus' disciples named Peter stepped forward to explain to the crowds what was happening. He said, "This is part of God's prophecy being fulfilled. We are eyewitnesses of the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead and is the true Messiah!"

Then Peter explained how Jesus had fulfilled everything the prophets said about the Messiah. He told the crowd, "Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God. In Jesus, you will find forgiveness—He is the final sacrifice for everyone's sin. This is God's new covenant offered not just to the Jews, but for all who want to be part of God's family."

That day thousands believed what Peter said and repented putting their trust in Jesus. They turned from their sins to follow Jesus and walk in God's ways. They were baptized and became a part of God's family—once again empowered to live out God's promise to be a blessing to all people.

God's new covenant was not written on tablets of stone like before, but on the hearts and minds of His people, so they would always know how to live in His ways.

These followers of Jesus were deeply committed to God and each other, sharing everything they had, praying, learning God's ways together, and helping anyone in need—all with great joy and generosity. Daily they ate together to honor and remember Jesus' life given for them.

They saw God do amazing things through them—miracles and healing—as He added people to their group each day.

This was the beginning of what the Bible calls the Church—a community of people all over the world who, because of Jesus, once again enjoy a life that is full and complete—a life lived close to God . . . the way God always intended it to be!

DIALOGUE | THE MISSION AND POWER

Remember this is a dialogue, not a quiz. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

Jesus commanded His disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, GO and make disciples of all the nations, all over the world. Baptize these new disciples in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey all the commands I have given you and to walk in my ways. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age. God’s Spirit will come and live inside of you, giving you peace and leading you in all the ways of truth.”

1. What is the mission Jesus sends His disciples on?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Make disciples and baptize them.

2. What is a disciple? How do you make a disciple?

3. In light of the mission, why is it important Jesus has ALL authority?

- He has the authority to command the mission.
- He has the authority to fulfill the mission.
- Disciples make disciples in his authority and power.

4. What do you think is the implication of “GO” and “make” disciples?

What are Jesus’ disciples to be about?

- “Go” implies intentionality, movement, change.
- “Make” implies it’s a process.

5. Is this command also for us today?

6. What’s the difference between someone who believes in God and a disciple of Jesus?

7. How do you need to live differently in light of this command?

- Disciples make disciples.
- Who are you discipling now in your life?

8. What’s keeping you from making disciples?

9. What do you see Jesus saying here about disciples and baptism?

10. Who is to be baptized? What is the purpose of baptism?

11. If you have submitted to Jesus as Lord of your life and have confessed this to be true in your life, then you are His disciple. Have you been baptized?

12. If you confess Jesus as Lord and have never been baptized, raise your hand.

In your context you may not need to ask people to raise their hands. What you are trying to do here is find out which disciples have never been baptized. Do this in an appropriate and sensitive manner.

13. Is there anything keeping you from being obedient to this command of Jesus for your life?

14. In the Story, thousands repented and put their trust in Jesus. What were they repenting of and turning to?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Living for themselves as their own God and turning to God in faith—submitting to Jesus' Lordship over all of life.

15. What was the result of their repentance? How did they live differently?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- They turned away from their old way of living and began walking in Jesus' ways.

16. What do we learn about the Spirit from this Story?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Jesus said God's Spirit will come and live inside of you—giving you peace and leading you in all the ways of truth.
- In some ways like back in the garden (closeness with God restored), in some ways better—God by His Spirit now lives INSIDE people! Restoration is taking place now.
- The Spirit preceded them preaching the gospel. It even affects their language, and it interprets the gospel to the hearts of the listeners individually (many languages)! THEN they went boldly to explain to people what happened. It was the work of the Spirit preceding and empowering their “going and preaching the gospel.”

17. Do you have a growing sense of the Spirit of God dwelling in you?

18. How is the work of the Holy Spirit changing your life right now?

19. After Jesus ascended into heaven, what were His followers/disciples doing in the story?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Jesus commissions them; they wait on God's Spirit in prayer. That is their role: to wait on God's power. They were praying (listening), and the Spirit came.

Mark 16:20

Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word

1 Corinthians 1:18

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

EXTENDING THE DIALOGUE

FURTHER APPLICATION

24. If what we discussed today is true, how does/should it affect your life?
25. How would it affect us as a community?
26. How would it affect others—our neighborhood, our city?

WALKING IT OUT

The Walking It Out Handout is a tool to help us engage the Story individually and with others during the week. This session alone is not nearly enough for someone to be saturated in the Story and begin living out the implications of the Story in everyday life with a community.

As you distribute them, point out a few key things from the handouts you as a leader have already found meaningful.

WALKING IT OUT . . .

WEEK 8 | THE MISSION AND POWER

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT . . .

- Can the people in your life (friends, family, co-workers, neighbors) tell you are a disciple of Jesus? How do they know? If not, why?

- Ask God to show you at least one or two people He wants you to “go and make disciples” of. Disciples make disciples. God will give us people to disciple if we ask Him and are obedient to what He shows us.
- Meditate on the reality that if you are a disciple of Jesus, God’s own Spirit dwells in you! How does this make a difference in your life? Do you live daily with the reality that your power to be and make disciples comes from the Holy Spirit?
- Jesus commanded His disciples to be baptized as a public proclamation of their trust in Him and His Lordship. If you have never been baptized, ask some of your spiritual leaders how and when you can take this step of obedience to Jesus.
- Have you ever led someone to put his or her trust in Jesus’ Lordship and become His disciple? Ask God to give you this opportunity . . . then look out!
- How can you begin to grow in prayer and listening to God? As we pray and wait on the Spirit’s power amazing things begin to happen!

THINGS TO READ ABOUT . . .

Acts 1-2 | Get the full version of this week’s story and much more. Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/acts1-2>.

John 14:15–31 | Jesus comforts his disciples and promises the coming of the Holy Spirit. Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/john14>.

“Prayer and the Gospel” | A great article by Keller on how the gospel changes our prayers from mere petition to fellowship with God in Christ. Read online: <http://bit.ly/keller-prayer>.

“This is He Who Baptizes with the Holy Spirit” | John Piper looks at the testimony of John the Baptist who says Jesus is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. Piper also talks about the work and reality of the Holy Spirit in the believer’s life. Read, listen, or watch online: <http://bit.ly/piper-hs>.

“Andrew Murray on Prayer Six” | Classics on prayer written more than 100 years ago: Abide in Christ, The Prayer Life, Waiting on God, With Christ in the School of Prayer, The Ministry of Intercession, and The Secret of Intercession. Read an excerpt or purchase online: <http://bit.ly/murray-prayer>.

Verses of the Bible to memorize (they’ll help you remember some big ideas from this week’s story):

"Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.'" —John 20:21

"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." —John 13:35

"Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.'" —from John 8:31

WEEK 9 | LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Before you begin . . .

BIG PICTURE

This is where we're going—the big ideas you want people to understand more deeply during this session.

- Spiritual disciplines (walking in the spirit, prayer, Word, giving)
- Personal transformation (fruit of the Spirit)
- Gospel in rhythms of life (Spirit in life)
- Community life and service

SET THE TRAINING TONE

You will not need to repeat this list every week, but be aware of these and reestablish the right tone as necessary.

- We are here to learn and change (not just a social time, but we also desire to grow closer and build community).
- Have fun, and keep things moving and participatory.
- Welcome a challenge from me or others in the group (give each other permission to challenge us—probe, ask questions, etc.).
- Strive to be honest and vulnerable, and we should honor that by keeping what is shared in confidence.
- We are going to try and answer questions as much as possible from within the Story found in the Bible. Everything we need to learn about God and humans can be found right here in His Story!

REVIEW LAST WEEK'S STORY

Last week . . . we looked at Jesus' command to His followers to be and make disciples: people who believe in Jesus and are continually learning how to walk in His ways. We learned that this command is for all ages—all people who follow Jesus. This command is for us! We are to be actively making disciples. We are all called to be baptized as a public display and confession of our faith in Christ.

Last week . . . we also talked about the idea that all of this is the work of God. He precedes us and makes us able to believe in Jesus. He then sends us out, by the power of His Holy Spirit, to live the life of a disciple and then also to make disciples. It is ALL God's work!

Last week . . . what really stuck with you from our last time together?

THE STORY & DIALOGUE

SCENE 1 | THE EARLY CHURCH PART 1

Story from Acts 2 and 4; Acts 9:31; 1 Corinthians 16; 2 Corinthians 8

The Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit filled all the disciples, marked the beginning of the new covenant people, known as the Church. Thousands came to believe all Jesus had done for them.

These new disciples of Jesus spent time together in prayer and were united in heart and mind so they shared everything they had. Selling their possessions and goods, they felt that what they owned was not their own. There were no needy people among them because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to anyone in need. They celebrated communion in their homes and ate together all with great joy, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. They testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's great blessing was upon them all. And the Lord added to their number daily people who were being saved.

The apostles were performing many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. Everyone was filled with awe, and all the believers were meeting regularly at the Temple in the area known as Solomon's Colonnade, where they devoted themselves to the apostles teaching of the Word.

Guided by the Spirit, the church grew in Jerusalem and then spread throughout the region as the disciples gave their lives fully to the work of the gospel. They continued to preach about Jesus' death and resurrection and new life for all who would believe. They lived generous lives, sacrificing for those who were in need. All of this displayed God's great generosity toward mankind in real, tangible ways.

The believers were encouraged in a letter by one of the apostles named Paul, who wrote, "I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity.

"I can tell you that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in this gift for the believers in Jerusalem. They even did more than we had hoped, for their

first action was to give themselves to the Lord and then to us, just as God wanted them to do.”

Another time Paul taught the believers, “You should follow the same procedure I gave to the churches in Galatia. On the first day of each week, you should each put aside a portion of the money you have earned. Don’t wait until I get there and then try to collect it all at once.” In this way the church continued to grow and be a blessing to each other as they supported the continued spread of the gospel.

These were times of great growth and blessing for the Church as they were guided and strengthened by the indwelling Holy Spirit who led them in all the ways of truth and life.

SCENE 1 DIALOGUE I THE EARLY CHURCH PART 1

Remember this is a dialogue, not a quiz. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

1. What are the disciples up to in this new life? What types of things are they doing?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Prayer, sharing their things, selling things to fund the mission, eating together, preaching, giving to the work, sacrificing, learning from the Apostles, studying the Word, celebrating communion, living a life of service, etc.

2. Where did you see them living out these rhythms:

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Listen(ing), eat(ing), celebrate(ing), bless(ing), Storyformed . . . were they reCreating? It says they were filled with abundant joy!

3. What parts of this story are true in your life today?

4. Which parts of the story do you wish were true in your life?

5. What do you think is keeping these things from being true?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Not trusting in and being led by the Spirit!

SCENE 2 I THE EARLY CHURCH PART 2

Story from 1 Corinthians

Let’s look at another story about the Church. Several years went by, and problems began to arise among some of the believers. They were no longer living under the power of the Spirit, but instead were becoming just like the rest of their culture.

Corinth was a port city, and along with great economic gain and philosophical understanding came questionable moral behavior. The problems of the city began to affect the Corinthian church. Quarreling and divisiveness had sprung up among the believers, and some leaders started to claim spiritual superiority over one another. Some of the believers even began to sue one another in public courts.

Others were coming to their communal meals and overeating and drinking to the point where some were drunk and some went away hungry. Sexual immorality in the church became a problem too. One man was even reported to be having an affair with his own stepmother, and no one was doing anything about it! On top of all of that, the church was starting to divide itself into factions based on whose preaching they liked best.

The Apostle Paul wrote them a letter stating, “Each of you says, ‘I belong to Paul,’ or ‘I belong to Apollos,’ or ‘I belong to Cephas,’ or ‘I belong to Christ.’” But Paul told them, “All things are yours . . . you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God. The place of the preachers is not to establish themselves as leaders among men; instead, people should think of us all as servants of Christ.”

There were also fights about which spiritual gifts were the “best,” and they began to argue about whether Jesus was really raised from the dead or not. (Pause for a moment.)

The good news for this story is that the church in Corinth was teachable and ultimately repented.

SCENE 2 DIALOGUE I THE EARLY CHURCH PART 2

Remember this is a dialogue, not a quiz. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

6. What was going on here? What had happened? Why such a difference between this church and the way things were in the beginning?

The Apostle Paul wrote to another church in the region, warning them how to avoid all of this.

Gal. 5:16

So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won’t be doing what your flesh desires. The flesh desires to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the flesh desires. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.

When you follow the desires of your flesh, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their flesh to His cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives.

7. What are your thoughts about this in light of the two stories we heard about the church?

8. What do you notice about the differences between these two lists?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- The desires of the flesh produce feelings and actions that lead to relational strife.
- The fruits of the Spirit are both internal and external at the same time.
- We love because God is love. We are patient because God is patient.

Desires of the flesh Fruit of the Spirit

Sexual immorality, Love
 Impurity Joy
 Lustful pleasures Peace
 Idolatry Patience
 Sorcery Kindness
 Hostility and quarreling Goodness
 Jealousy Faithfulness
 Outbursts of anger Gentleness
 Selfish ambition Self-control
 Dissension, division
 Envy
 Drunkenness and wild parties

Fruit of the Spirit

Love
 Joy
 Peace
 Patience
 Kindness
 Goodness
 Faithfulness
 Gentleness
 Self-control

9. How do we work out the implications of this?

10. How do you get in this Spirit-led mode? How do you stay in it?

11. What does it look like NOT to live by the Spirit and try to please God in the flesh?

12. What is our only hope of not ending up like the Corinthian church or being completely like the flesh-led world?

- Life led by the Spirit

Romans 1:1–2 (The Message)

With the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah, that fateful dilemma is resolved. A new power is in operation. The Spirit of life in Christ, like a strong wind, has magnificently cleared the air, freeing you from a fated lifetime of brutal tyranny at the hands of sin and death.

EXTENDING THE DIALOGUE

FURTHER APPLICATION

13. If what we discussed today is true, how does/should it affect your life?
14. How would it affect us as a community?
15. How would it affect others—our neighborhood, our city?

WALKING IT OUT

The Walking It Out Handout is a tool to help us engage the Story individually and with others during the week. This session alone is not nearly enough for someone to be saturated in the Story and begin living out the implications of the Story in everyday life with a community.

As you distribute them, point out a few key things from the handouts you as a leader have already found meaningful.

WALKING IT OUT . . .

WEEK 9 | LIFE OF THE CHURCH IN THE SPIRIT

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT . . .

- Where in your life are you living out the work of the flesh?
From Galatians 5:19–21: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these.
- Where in your life are you living out the work of the Spirit?
From Galatians 5:22–23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Ask God to reveal to your heart where He wants to lead you into growth and maturity.
- Meditate on the reality that if you are a disciple, God's own Spirit lives in you! How does this make a difference in your life? Do you live daily with the reality that your power to live the life God has for you comes only from the Holy Spirit?
- Which of these rhythms of life do you need to grow in as you live out the gospel and are led by the Spirit?
Storyformed, listen, bless, eat, celebrate, reCreate. Learn more about these rhythms: <http://bit.ly/i-r>.
- Spend some time this week just purely LISTENING to God. It can be hard at first, but try and quiet your mind and just listen for his voice. Don't talk or say much . . . just listen. God will speak!

THINGS TO READ ABOUT . . .

Acts 1–4 | Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/acts1-4>.

Romans 8 | Compare the NIV and The Message versions online side-by-side: <http://bit.ly/rom8>.

Galatians 5 | Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/gal-5>.

Soma's Gospel Identity and Rhythms | Read online: <http://bit.ly/i-r>.

"The Spirit and the Flesh" | A chapter of Andrew Murray's classic book The Spirit of Christ. Read online: <http://bit.ly/murray-spirit>.

"The War Within: Flesh vs. Spirit" | John Piper teaching from Galatians 5 answers the what, why, and how of "walking in the Spirit." Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/piper-spirit>.

Verses of the Bible to memorize (they'll help you remember some big ideas from this week's story):

"Walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh." —Galatians 5:16

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." —from Galatians 5:22–23

"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples." —
John 15:8

WEEK 10 | LIFE IN THE END

Before you begin . . .

BIG PICTURE

This is where we're going—the big ideas you want people to understand more deeply during this session.

- Cost of discipleship
- Cultures restored (all nations brought back to God)
- A people of reconciliation
- Jesus' return
- God restores all things

SET THE TRAINING TONE

You will not need to repeat this list every week, but be aware of these and reestablish the right tone as necessary.

- We are here to learn and change (not just a social time, but we also desire to grow closer and build community).
- Have fun, and keep things moving and participatory.
- Welcome a challenge from me or others in the group (give each other permission to challenge us—probe, ask questions, etc.).
- Strive to be honest and vulnerable, and we should honor that by keeping what is shared in confidence.
- We are going to try and answer questions as much as possible from within the Story found in the Bible. Everything we need to learn about God and humans can be found right here in His Story!

REVIEW LAST WEEK'S STORY

Last week . . . we looked at Jesus' disciples in the early church. We saw they lived a life of prayer, sharing their things, selling things to fund the mission, eating together, preaching, giving to the work, sacrificing, learning from the apostles, studying the Word, celebrating communion, living a life of service together.

Last week . . . we also looked at two ways of living and being the church: controlled by our own fleshly desires or led by the Holy Spirit. We looked at two lists the Apostle Paul taught some of the disciples. It showed the type of life each of these two ways of living would produce.

Last week . . . what stuck with you from our last time together?

THE STORY & DIALOGUE

SCENE 1 | COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

Story from Luke 9:57–62

When Jesus says, “Come follow me,” He invites us to be His disciples and let Him lead us on a spiritual journey. There are costs associated with this journey, this life. I want to tell you a story about Jesus that happened during His lifetime. In it, Jesus offers three people the opportunity to be His disciples.

Now while walking along the road to Jerusalem, a man came to Jesus and said, “I want to follow you wherever you go.”

Jesus looked at the man and, knowing his heart, said, “Foxes have holes. Birds of the air have nests, but I don’t even have a place to sleep at night.”

Later, while on that same road, Jesus approached another man. And He said to him, “Follow me.”

The man replied to Jesus, saying, “But let me first go home and bury my Father.”

But Jesus said to the man, “Let the spiritually dead bury the dead. Your duty is to the living—go and preach about the Kingdom of God.”

While on the same road, there was a third man. He was like the first who approached and said to Jesus, “I want to follow you.” Then he added, “First let me go home and say goodbye to my family and friends who are there.”

Jesus said to this man, “Anyone who has put his hand to the plow and then looks backward is not fit to be a part of the Kingdom of God. Once you have started in this life, there is no looking back! You can’t put God’s kingdom off until tomorrow. If you do there is no place in the Kingdom of God for you.”

SCENE 1 DIALOGUE | COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

Remember this is a dialogue, not a quiz. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

1. Jesus invites these people to follow Him, to be His disciple. What excuses did they have for not obeying Jesus?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- First man: Jesus responds to his quick offer to follow Him (see Jesus' response below).
- Second man: Let me first go and bury my father.
- Third man: Let me first go and say goodbye to my family and friends.

2. What was wrong with each of their responses? Anything?

Note: Culturally, the man who wanted to bury his father was not waiting to attend his funeral. He would have been saying, "After my father has died and I have fulfilled my duty as his son and received my inheritance, I will then come and be your disciple."

- Let me first go and . . .

3. What was Jesus' response to these men?

You may need to guide the discussion toward:

- "Foxes have holes. Birds of the air have nests, but I don't even have a place to sleep at night." Jesus was exposing this man's desires to keep hold of his earthly comforts.
- "Let the spiritually dead bury the dead. Your duty is to the living—go and preach about the Kingdom of God."
- "Anyone who has put his hand to the plow and then looks backward is not fit to be a part of the Kingdom of God."

These are three of the primary hindrances to true discipleship, illustrated by the three men who were not willing to go all the way with Jesus as Lord.

- Mr. Too Quick: the love of earthly comforts.
- Mr. Too Slow: the precedence of a role, job, or occupation.
- Mr. Too Easy: the priority of family and friendships.

All of them had their priorities wrongly focused.

4. What is Jesus teaching should be our highest priority in life as His disciple?

Luke 14:33 Jesus said, "Any of you who does not give up everything they have cannot be my disciple."

5. What changes in your life and priorities would you need to make to be Jesus' disciple more fully?

6. How important is it for us to teach this story to the people we disciple? Why?

SCENE 2 | CREATION RESTORED

Story from Luke 17; Acts 3; 1 Corinthians 15; Rev. 21:1–8; Rev 22:1–7

Jesus promised to come back one day, saying, “When I return again, everyone will know I am here. It’ll be like a huge flash of lighting that fills the sky!”

When Jesus returns He will destroy all evil, sin, and rebellion. There will be no more sin or sickness, pain or death. Every Christian, either alive or dead at the time, will receive new bodies and live on a new earth, restored back to the way God designed it. They will live forever!

God showed one of Jesus’ disciples, named John, what this would be like in a dream. John faithfully wrote down all that God showed him. John wrote:

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth were gone forever. I saw the holy city coming down from God out of heaven. It looked like a bride beautifully dressed and ready for her husband.

“I saw a river, with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of Jesus. It flowed down the center of the main street in the holy city. On each side of the river grew a tree—and BOTH—were a Tree of Life! On them was enough fruit to heal all the nations of the world!

“No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of Jesus will be there, and His disciples will be there worshipping Him. They will see his face, and they will be known and marked as His own. There will be no nighttime there—no need for lamps or sun—for God Himself will shine on them. Together, they will rule over everything forever and ever.

“Then I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, ‘Look, God’s home is again among the humans! He will live with them, and they will be His people. God Himself will be with them. He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sadness or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever.’

“And Jesus, sitting on the throne said, ‘Watch, I am making everything new! Everything has happened as planned! I am the Alpha and the Omega—the Beginning and the End. To all who are thirsty I will give freely from the springs of the water of life. Everyone who overcomes the world—those who believe in me and allow me to conquer sin and selfishness for them—they will inherit all these blessings, and I will be their God, and they will be my children.’

“But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—they will end up in the fiery lake. This is the second death.”

And Jesus said, “Watch as you wait for me because I am coming back soon!”

SCENE 2 DIALOGUE | CREATION RESTORED

Remember this is a dialogue, not a quiz. The “answers” below each question are there to help you as a leader guide the discussion toward some key ideas.

7. When you heard this story today, what did it remind you of in the bigger Story we have heard so far?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- The garden, the way things were originally.
- God with humans, peace, harmony.
- No death. Humans living forever.
- All things restored to what God had intended!

8. What do we see that was broken early in the story that is now reconciled and restored? Who restores it?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- Relationships, nature, life—everything!
- Jesus is the one who makes all things new. Remember, He is Lord over creation, Lord over humanity, Lord over ALL!

9. How does it make you feel that (if you are in Christ—His disciple) you will live forever?!

10. In the story we see all nations living together in peace worshipping God forever. What does that show us about what God is now doing among His people—Jesus’ disciples? How are we to live in light of this?

You may need to guide the discussion toward . . .

- If God created everything “good” and “excellent” and is restoring all things to that condition, we cannot live at odds to His perfect plan. We, too, are to be agents of his reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:18–20

All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us.

[Resting Slide]

11. What does this passage from the Bible teach us concerning our role in reconciliation?

12. Who does the Story say will inherit this eternal life lived close to God?

- Everyone who allows God to conquer sin and selfishness for them will inherit all these blessings. Thoughts on this?

13. From what we've learned in the story so far, why is this eternal life lived close to God not the only possible eternal ending for humans?

“But cowards, unbelievers, the corrupt, murderers, the immoral, those who practice witchcraft, idol worshipers, and all liars—they will end up in the fiery lake. This is the second death.”

Note: The word coward is rooted in self-preservation, an unwillingness to accept the cost of following Jesus.

14. What are your thoughts our questions about what Jesus says here?

EXTENDING THE DIALOGUE

USING MEDIA

Use of songs or artwork for further discussion . . .

Penn Jillette Video

Comedian/magician Penn Jillette talks about a man who loved enough to give him a Bible. Penn is an atheist.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JHS8adO3hM>

FURTHER APPLICATION

15. If what we discussed today is true, how does/should it affect your life?

16. In light of major decisions or situations you are facing, how does all of this make you feel about your life based on where the Story is ultimately headed? Does it give you hope?

17. What most affected you about this discipleship-training?

How do you intend to make disciple-making a priority in your life?

18. If we really began to live as active disciple-makers, how would it affect our neighborhood, our city?

The Great Commission

19. How can we pray for you?

WALKING IT OUT

The Walking It Out Handout is a tool to help us engage the Story individually and with others during the week. This session alone is not nearly enough for someone to be saturated in the Story and begin living out the implications of the Story in everyday life with a community.

As you distribute them, point out a few key things from the handouts you as a leader have already found meaningful.

WALKING IT OUT . . .

WEEK 10 | OUTCOME OF THE MISSION

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT . . .

- Take some time this week to look at how you spend your time. Make a simple list of what you spend your time on. How might God be leading you to reprioritize your time to serve Him and others as a disciple better?
- Re-read Luke 9:57–62 this week and ask yourself which of the three men you can most relate to. Are there seemingly “important” things you may be hiding behind when it comes to being a fully devoted follower of Christ? Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/end-of-luke9>.
- How is God leading you to make disciples? What is your first step?
- Meditate on the reality that Jesus will return some day and restore all things back to the way God originally intended them to be. Those who are His disciples will live and rule over the earth with Him forever. Amazing!
- How might you celebrate and throw parties in such a way as to reflect the reality that you will live forever?
- In what areas of your life could God use you to be a peacemaker or bring reconciliation into people’s lives?
- How can you incorporate regular times of praise and worship into your day that reflect a thankfulness to God for choosing to include you in His eternal plans?

THINGS TO READ ABOUT . . .

Luke 9 | Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/luke9>.

Revelation 21–22 | Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/rev21-22>.

Hebrews 12:18–29 | Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/heb12>.

True Discipleship | By William MacDonald. One of the all-time best books on being a disciple of Jesus. Read the entire book online: <http://bit.ly/wmac>.

Heaven | Randy Alcorn uses scripture to help answer questions about what the new earth will be like. Read an excerpt or buy online: <http://bit.ly/heaven-book>.

“The Triumph of the Gospel in the New Heavens and the New Earth” | Piper explores what it means for us now that someday all things will be made new. Read or listen online: <http://bit.ly/piper-new-earth>.

Verses of the Bible to memorize (they’ll help you remember some big ideas from this week’s story):

“I do all things for the sake of the gospel.” —from 1 Corinthians 9:23

“Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” —Luke 14:27