

Love and Live...



Parables and Stories of the Bible



Riverside Church LIFEGROUPS

VOLUME 10 *Supplemental Stories* *for* **Summer 2015**

A Nation of
Rebellion & Restoration
...continued

**MAKING
DISCIPLES
WHO LOVE & LIVE
LIKE JESUS**

Attend

Connect

Serve

Share

Lead

SMALL GROUP GROUND RULES

HOW WE LOVE EACH OTHER

These are guidelines more than rules.

CONFIDENTIALITY: What is shared in the group stays in the group. Unless given permission to share, keep what is shared confidential. This must be a safe environment where people can be real, open and honest with their struggles and their victories.

TRANSPARENCY: We encourage you to share from your heart—to let your walls down, so that others can really know you. It's difficult to love someone as God calls us to do without really knowing them in a deep and meaningful way.

NO CROSS-TALK: Be considerate of others as they are sharing; don't have side conversations. Please silence your phones and leave the room if you have to respond to an urgent call or text message.

NO CONVINCING: Share your opinions—a different opinion is welcome. However, please don't try to convince others to your way of thinking. Be aware of Riverside's core beliefs. If someone is trying to convince you, offer to discuss the issue further at a later time.

DON'T FIX: Let's try to hear what people are sharing without trying to fix them. If they want advice, they'll ask for it. If you have been through a similar circumstance, it's okay to let the person know and that you're available to talk more about it later if they're interested. Very rarely does a Christian cliché or quoted scripture help right in this moment. It's uncomfortable to see someone in pain or struggling, and if we're honest with ourselves, often we speak out primarily to ease our own discomfort. Let them NEED Jesus and ASK you for help when they're ready.

DON'T RESCUE: When someone is sharing something deeply personal and/or painful, a tension builds that may feel uncomfortable for you. There can be a tendency to try to make them feel better about themselves or the situation or relieve the tension with a smart remark or quick wit. Often this will cause people to stop sharing and results in their not going as deep as they might have gone. There is a let-down, like "the moment" has passed. Resist the temptation to pass them a tissue, touch them, or remark. This is hard, but it really is loving to give people the uninterrupted time to get it all out.

LISTEN: Let's value one another during the discussion by really listening to what is being shared. Nurture your sense of curiosity about someone else by focusing on the other person, rather than trying to figure out what you're going to say next or how you're going to respond. Be aware of how much you're talking—we want to give everyone a chance to share.

PAUSE: After someone shares, allow a pause in conversation to give the person sharing the chance to finish and the group the opportunity to consider what was just shared before responding.

SMALL GROUP GROUND RULES

SILENCE: It is important to allow silence in the group; it provides an opportunity for someone to share and for members in the group to process the topic or question being considered.

USE “I” STATEMENTS: It’s easy to talk about the issues of others, but for our purposes, we want you to put yourself on the table. Self-reflect. This is one time that it is kind of all about you. Try to use “I” statements, rather than “we”, “the church”, “Christians”, or “us”, etc.

SELF-ASSESS: Be self-aware of how you are personally effecting your small-group environment through your words, actions, and non-verbal communication. All of this takes practice. We don’t want you to be overly self-conscious, but it’s important that you pay attention to your own behavior and how well you’re loving others as they share. For example, if you catch yourself trying to “fix” someone, call yourself out, “Oops, I just tried to fix you. I’m sorry.”

COMMIT TO RESOLVING CONFLICT: The two things that bond a group more than anything else are conflict and crisis. Nobody wants either, but this is real life. Try to view conflict within the group as an opportunity to grow closer, to learn more about each other, and to extend grace. “Travel light.” Commit to working through the conflict, rather than sweeping it under the rug or holding on to a grudge. Pretending everything is okay, putting up walls, or venting with someone else breaks down relationships and is not loving. If you’re not sure how to resolve the conflict and need help, ask your facilitator or another ministry leader.

SOLOMON ASKS FOR WISDOM

EXAMINING THE DESIRES OF YOUR HEART

1 KINGS 3:1-15

PRAY

REVIEW GROUP GROUND RULES

How we practice loving each other

FACILITATOR

- Do this each week for the first few weeks and then again whenever there is someone new or you feel your group could benefit from a review.
- Remember to keep it conversational, eventually quizzing them, “What does it mean to be self-aware?”

RECAP

FACILITATOR

The following stories are some of the stories briefly mentioned in the backgrounds between stories in the Spring Story Set, stories about a long period of rebellion and rebuilding.

BACKGROUND TO THIS WEEKS STORY

FACILITATOR

This is to help connect the dots from where we ended to where the next story starts. It is here as a help for you and as an option.

After David died, Solomon became king. He loved God and followed all of his father’s final instructions. Solomon avenged many of the wrongs done to his father, and all of Israel was firmly established under his rule. *THIS is where our story begins.*

TELL THE STORY

1 KINGS 3:1-15 SOLOMON ASKS FOR WISDOM

REMINDERS

If you have new people, explain this intentional process (Story it, Rebuild it, Read it).

1. With their Bibles closed and yours open, tell the story as a story.
2. Have the group open their Bibles and rebuild the story.
3. Have a volunteer read the story directly from the Bible to make sure nothing is missed.

THE QUESTIONS

FACILITATOR

You have the freedom to come up with HEART QUESTIONS for your group, but keep in mind that these should be FROM A PLACE OF CURIOSITY AS TO WHAT GOD IS SHOWING THEM, rather than a desire to teach them something.

SUGGESTIONS

Please don't try to cover all of these. Pick the one/s that God is leading you to ask your specific group.

- What do you most want from God?
- How have you experienced God's extravagant love?
- What does this story show you about your relationship with God right now?
- How does this story challenge you in your current circumstances?

THE NEXT STORY

2 KINGS 5:1-19 THE HEALING OF NAAMAN

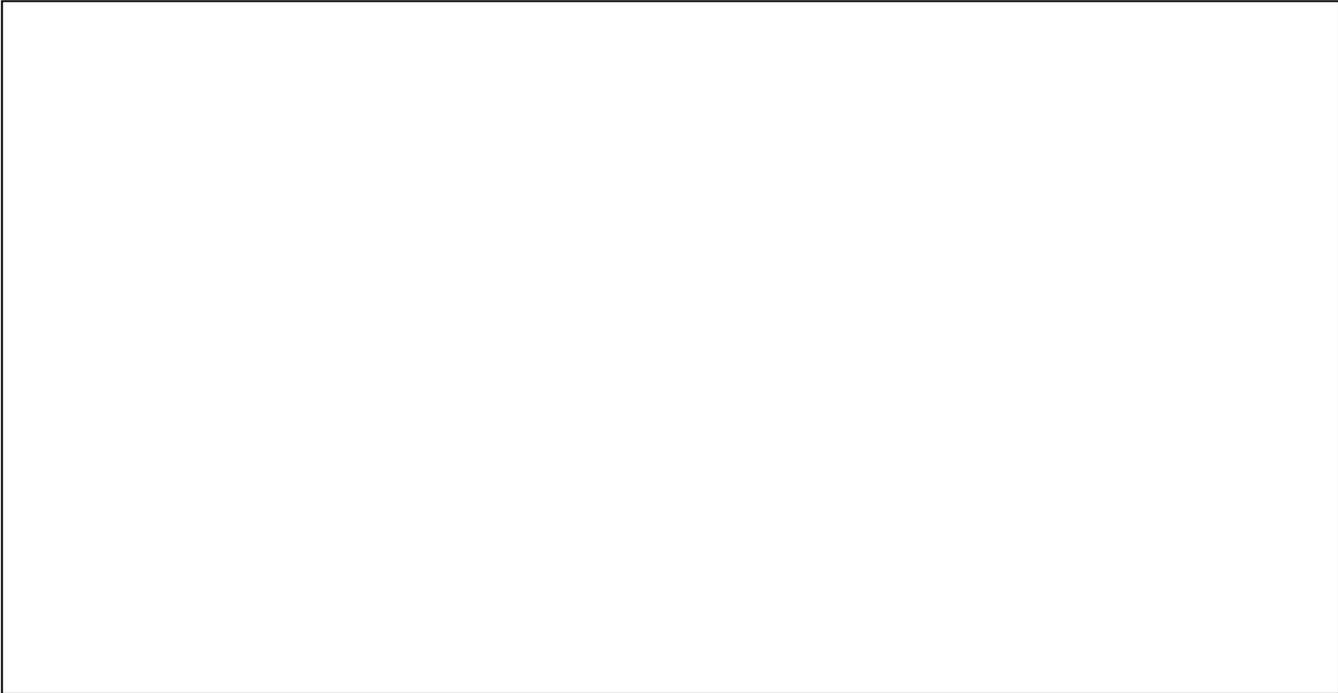
FACILITATOR

- Encourage the group to read the story at least once before next week.
- Unless you have just branched, **ASK IF ANYONE WILL VOLUNTEER TO TELL THE NEXT WEEK'S STORY.** Encourage and remind them that it's just telling the story, not memorizing it. We're always encouraging and inviting people to "get in the game," take a risk, and get out of their comfort zones. That's a huge part of discipleship.

PRAYER REQUESTS

FACILITATOR

- Encourage the group to keep it personal and brief, allowing others time to share their praises and requests.
- Explain that they are invited to share if God has put something on their heart, but they don't have to have something to share every week.



PRAY

DIGGING IN

FACILITATOR

This is an opportunity for group members to do some further Bible study on their own, if they choose to. The desire is to help them find a passion to get into the Bible and study it for themselves from a place of curiosity.

On your own this week...

Read the next story: 1 Kings 3:16-28. Solomon was indeed very wise! Solomon wrote most of the book of Proverbs. Challenge yourself to read one chapter of Proverbs a day for a month (There are 31).

THE HEALING OF NAAMAN

SIMPLY OBEYING

2 KINGS 5:1-16

PRAY

REVIEW GROUP GROUND RULES

How we practice loving each other

FACILITATOR

- Do this each week for the first few weeks and then again whenever there is someone new or you feel your group could benefit from a review.
- Remember to keep it conversational, eventually quizzing them, “What does it mean to be self-aware?”

RECAP

FACILITATOR

- Last week we looked at the story how Solomon asked God for wisdom.
- What’s something that you took away from that story, something that stands out or you had to “chew on” this week?

BACKGROUND TO THIS WEEKS STORY

FACILITATOR

This is to help connect the dots from where we ended to where the next story starts. It is here as a help for you and as an option.

Solomon loved God and followed all the instructions of his father, eventually building the Temple according to God's exact instructions. God gave him the same promise he gave to his father; if he and his descendants followed God with integrity and godliness, obeying His laws and regulations, they would never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel. Solomon had great wealth and lived in great splendor. He married many women from other nations, and in his old age, he began to worship their gods. Thus Solomon did what was evil in the Lord’s sight, as did many of the kings after him. Fast forward many years, long after the Israel and Judah separated, and long after the contest at Mount Carmel. The prophet Elijah had been taken into Heaven by a chariot of fire, and Elisha had become his successor. Elisha performed many miracles and became well known throughout the land as a healer and Man of God. *THIS is where our story begins.*

TELL THE STORY

2 KINGS 5:1-16 THE HEALING OF NAAMAN

REMINDERS

If you have new people, explain this intentional process (Story it, Rebuild it, Read it).

4. With their Bibles closed and yours open, tell the story as a story.
5. Have the group open their Bibles and rebuild the story.
6. Have a volunteer read the story directly from the Bible to make sure nothing is missed.

THE QUESTIONS

FACILITATOR

You have the freedom to come up with HEART QUESTIONS for your group, but keep in mind that these should be FROM A PLACE OF CURIOSITY AS TO WHAT GOD IS SHOWING THEM, rather than a desire to teach them something.

SUGGESTIONS

Please don't try to cover all of these. Pick the one/s that God is leading you to ask your specific group.

- When has God ever asked you to do something that didn't make any sense?
- How have you experienced God's mercy?
- Who do you most relate to in this story?
- How does this story challenge you in your current circumstances?

THE NEXT STORY

2 KINGS 5:20-27 THE GREED OF GEHAZI

FACILITATOR

- Encourage the group to read the story at least once before next week.
- Unless you have just branched, **ASK IF ANYONE WILL VOLUNTEER TO TELL THE NEXT WEEK'S STORY.** Encourage and remind them that it's just telling the story, not memorizing it. We're always encouraging and inviting people to "get in the game," take a risk, and get out of their comfort zones. That's a huge part of discipleship.

PRAYER REQUESTS

FACILITATOR

- Encourage the group to keep it personal and brief, allowing others time to share their praises and requests.
- Explain that they are invited to share if God has put something on their heart, but they don't have to have something to share every week.

PRAY

DIGGING IN

FACILITATOR

This is an opportunity for group members to do some further Bible study on their own, if they choose to. The desire is to help them find a passion to get into the Bible and study it for themselves from a place of curiosity.

On your own this week...

This is not the first or last mention of the Jordan River in the bible. Go to biblegateway.com, select the New Living Translation (NLT) and search "Jordan River" to read about other significant events that took place there.

THE GREED OF GEHAZI

SCHEMING FOR PROFIT

2 KINGS 5:20-27

PRAY

REVIEW GROUP GROUND RULES

How we practice loving each other

- Do this each week for the first few weeks and then again whenever there is someone new or you feel your group could benefit from a review.
- Remember to keep it conversational, eventually quizzing them, “What does it mean to be self-aware?”

RECAP

FACILITATOR

- Last week we looked at the story of how Naaman was healed.
- What’s something that you took away from that story, something that stands out or you had to “chew on” this week?

BACKGROUND TO THIS WEEKS STORY

FACILITATOR

This is to help connect the dots from where we ended to where the next story starts. It is here as a help for you and as an option.

At Elisha’s urging, the mighty warrior Naaman had just washed seven times in the Jordan River and been healed of leprosy. When Naaman returned to Elisha to thank him and give him gifts, the prophet refused to accept anything for God’s gift of mercy. Elisha told him to go in peace, so Naaman, and his entire party, started back home again. *THIS is where our story begins.*

TELL THE STORY

2 KINGS 5:20-27 THE GREED OF GEHAZI

REMINDERS

If you have new people, explain this intentional process (Story it, Rebuild it, Read it).

- With their Bibles closed and yours open, tell the story as a story.
- Have the group open their Bibles and rebuild the story.
- Have a volunteer read the story directly from the Bible to make sure nothing is missed.

THE QUESTIONS

FACILITATOR

You have the freedom to come up with HEART QUESTIONS for your group, but keep in mind that these should be FROM A PLACE OF CURIOSITY AS TO WHAT GOD IS SHOWING THEM, rather than a desire to teach them something.

SUGGESTIONS

- Please don't try to cover all of these. Pick the one/s that God is leading you to ask your specific group.

- When have you schemed to get what you want?
- How has others' greed affected you?
- What's the "field" in your life?
- How does this story challenge you in your current circumstances?

THE NEXT STORY

2 KINGS 6:8-23 ELISHA SEES CHARIOTS OF FIRE

FACILITATOR

- Encourage the group to read the story at least once before next week.
- Each week **ASK IF ANYONE WILL VOLUNTEER TO TELL THE NEXT WEEK'S STORY**. Encourage and remind them that it's just telling the story, not memorizing it. We're always encouraging and inviting people to "get in the game," take a risk, and get out of their comfort zones. That's a huge part of discipleship.

PRAYER REQUESTS

FACILITATOR

- Encourage the group to keep it personal and brief, allowing others time to share their praises and requests.
- Explain that they are invited to share if God has put something on their heart, but they don't have to have something to share every week.

PRAY

DIGGING IN

FACILITATOR

This is an opportunity for group members to do some further Bible study on their own, if they choose to. The desire is to help them find a passion to get into the Bible and study it for themselves from a place of curiosity.

On your own this week...

Does Gehazi's punishment seem a bit harsh? Naaman, the commander of Aram's army, brought 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and 10 changes of garments with him when he asked Elisha to heal him. He thought he could buy his cleansing, but God's free gifts of grace and mercy were not for sale. Imagine the story Naaman, a witness to Jehovah's power, would tell when he returned to his own land. Imagine how Gehazi's actions changed this influential man's testimony. Now, look up what present-day country occupies ancient Aram. Does digging deeper shed more light on the seriousness and far-reaching effects Gehazi's actions might have had? Imagine how history might have changed or even how our world today might be different if this was a nation that worshiped the God of Israel. How does this information change how you see this story?

ELISHA SEES CHARIOTS OF FIRE

RELYING ON GOD

2 KINGS 6:8-23

PRAY

REVIEW GROUP GROUND RULES

How we practice loving each other

- Do this each week for the first few weeks and then again whenever there is someone new or you feel your group could benefit from a review.
- Remember to keep it conversational, eventually quizzing them, “What does it mean to fix?”

RECAP

FACILITATOR

- Last week we looked at the story of Gehazi’s greed.
- What’s something that you took away from that story, something that stands out or you had to “chew on” this week?

BACKGROUND TO THIS WEEKS STORY

FACILITATOR

This is to help connect the dots from where we ended to where the next story starts. It is here as a help for you and as an option.

This story takes place almost directly after our last story, with the exception of a fun little story about a miraculously floating ax head.

TELL THE STORY

2 KINGS 6:8-23 ELISHA SEES CHARIOTS OF FIRE

REMINDERS

If you have new people, explain this intentional process (Story it, Rebuild it, Read it).

- With their Bibles closed and yours open, tell the story as a story.
- Have the group open their Bibles and rebuild the story.
- Have a volunteer read the story directly from the Bible to make sure nothing is missed.

THE QUESTIONS

FACILITATOR

You have the freedom to come up with HEART QUESTIONS for your group, but keep in mind that these should be FROM A PLACE OF CURIOSITY AS TO WHAT GOD IS SHOWING THEM, rather than a desire to teach them something.

SUGGESTIONS

- Please don't try to cover all of these. Pick the one/s that God is leading you to ask your specific group.

- When has God opened your eyes to His perspective?
- When was the last time you had to really rely on God?
- How are you treating your enemies?
- How does this story challenge you in your current circumstances or beliefs?

THE NEXT STORY

NEHAMIAH 1:1 – 2:10 NEHEMIAH GOES TO THE KING

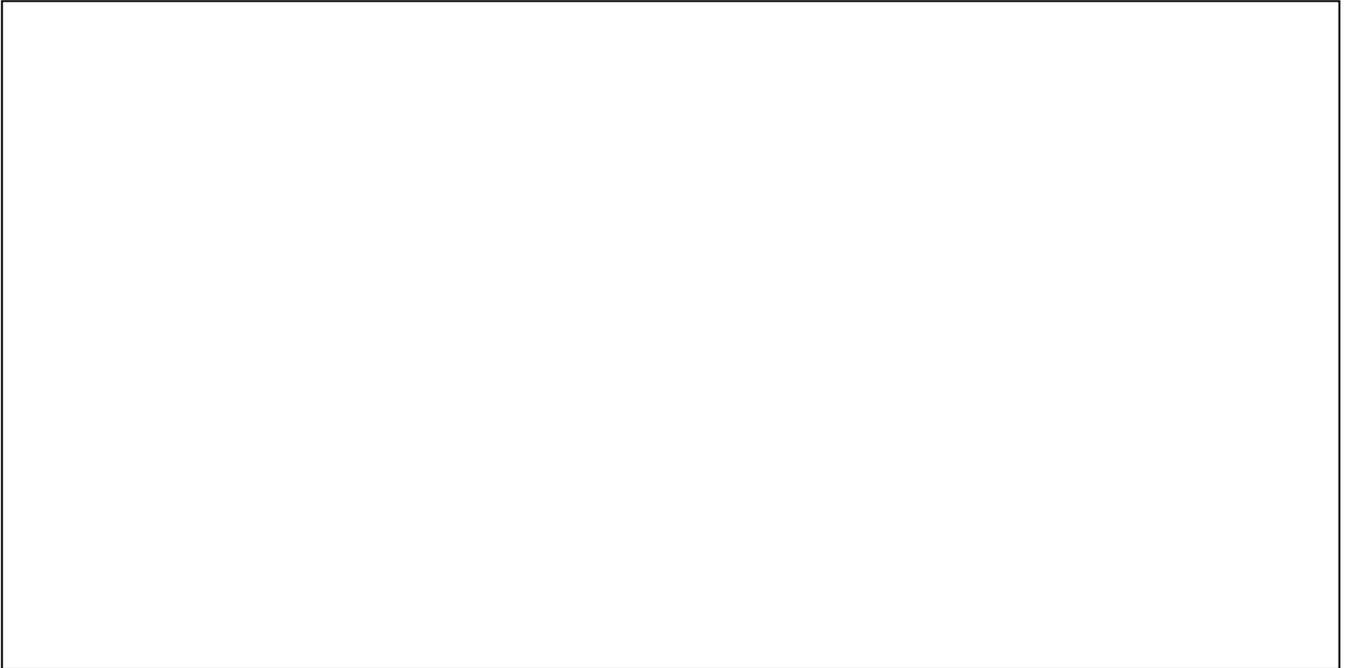
FACILITATOR

- Encourage the group to read the story at least once before next week.
- Each week **ASK IF ANYONE WILL VOLUNTEER TO TELL THE NEXT WEEK'S STORY**. Encourage and remind them that it's just telling the story, not memorizing it. We're always encouraging and inviting people to "get in the game," take a risk, and get out of their comfort zones. That's a huge part of discipleship.

PRAYER REQUESTS

FACILITATOR

- Encourage the group to keep it personal and brief, allowing others time to share their praises and requests.
- Explain that they are invited to share if God has put something on their heart, but they don't have to have something to share every week.



PRAY

DIGGING IN

FACILITATOR

This is an opportunity for group members to do some further Bible study on their own, if they choose to. The desire is to help them find a passion to get into the Bible and study it for themselves from a place of curiosity.

On your own this week...

Are angels protecting YOU? Read Psalms 91 and Psalms 34:1-7. Now, Google “billygraham.org Does each person have a guardian angel” and “billygraham.org Do angels still do things?” As you go about your week, ask God to make you more aware of His protection. How does this affect how you approach life?

NEHEMIAH GOES TO THE KING

ASKING GOD FOR HELP

NEHEMIAH 1:1 - 2:10

PRAY

FACILITATOR

- Start inviting others to open or close the group in prayer.

REVIEW GROUND RULES (IF NECESSARY)

FACILITATOR

- Do this whenever there is someone new or you feel your group could benefit from a review.
- Remember to keep it conversational, eventually quizzing them, “What does it mean to be self-aware?”

RECAP

FACILITATOR

- The last story we looked at was the story of how Elisha saw the chariots of fire.
- What’s something that you took away from that story, something that stands out or you had to “chew on” this week?

BACKGROUND TO THIS WEEKS STORY

FACILITATOR

This is to help connect the dots from where we ended to where the next story starts. It is here as a help for you and as an option.

Elisha performed many miracles. Years passed, and many more kings ruled over Judah. Many did what was wicked in the sight of the Lord, so God promised to bring disaster to the people of Judah. God finally, in his anger, banished the people of Jerusalem and Judah from His presence and sent them into exile. King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon led his army against Jerusalem, conquered it, burned down the Temple, destroyed all the important buildings, and tore down the walls around the city. All the people were either put to death, taken as prisoners, or sent into exile. Most fled to Egypt.

The land lie desolate for 70 years until King Cyrus of Persia allowed the exiles to return. After the people settled in their towns, and an alter to the Lord was built. Many years later, Ezra led the second group of exiles back to Israel, and eventually the temple was rebuilt. Ezra was given charge to teach the people God’s laws and use the wisdom God had given him to appoint judges to govern the people. Many years passed. *THIS is where our story begins.*

TELL THE STORY

NEHAMIAH 1:1 – 2:10 NEHEMIAH GOES TO THE KING

REMINDERS

If you have new people, explain this intentional process (Story it, Rebuild it, Read it).

- With their Bibles closed and yours open, tell the story as a story.
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- Have a volunteer read the story directly from the Bible to make sure nothing is missed.

THE QUESTIONS

FACILITATOR

You have the freedom to come up with HEART QUESTIONS for your group, but keep in mind that these should be FROM A PLACE OF CURIOSITY AS TO WHAT GOD IS SHOWING THEM, rather than a desire to teach them something.

SUGGESTIONS

- Please don't try to cover all of these. Pick the one/s that God is leading you to ask your specific group.

- What are the “crumbling walls” that need attention in your own life?
- Who do you most relate to in this story?
- Has God opened your eyes to a need around you?
- How does this story challenge you in your current circumstances?

PEEK AT THE NEXT STORY SET

FALL OF 2015

The Coming of the Messiah

We'll draw stories from Esther, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Jonah, Zechariah, Malachi, and finally Matthew—
The birth of Jesus.

PRAYER REQUESTS

FACILITATOR

- Encourage the group to keep it personal and brief, allowing others time to share their praises and requests.
- Explain that they are invited to share if God has put something on their heart, but they don't have to have something to share every week.

PRAY

DIGGING IN

FACILITATOR

This is an opportunity for group members to do some further Bible study on their own, if they choose to. The desire is to help them find a passion to get into the Bible and study it for themselves from a place of curiosity.

On your own this week...

Pray for each person in your group each day this week. Then observe what God does in your heart and in their lives.

ICE BREAKERS

TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

Going in a circle, have each person say 3 statements about him/herself—2 of them true and 1 a lie. Each should be equally plausible. The group members then guess which is a lie and why they think it's a lie.

WHO'S THAT?

Each person writes down 3 things about him/herself that others might not already know. Put all the papers in a hat. The reader pulls one, reads it, and the group attempts to identify the author. Finally, if the group cannot guess, the author identifies him/herself. You don't have to draw all the papers; it's fun to save some for other weeks.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Ahead of time, cut out several questions—more than the number of people you have in your group. Fold up the questions and put them in a basket or container. Pass it around the group. Each person draws out a question and reads it silently. If they don't like their question, they can exchange it. Allow enough time for each person to read and answer the question to the group.

Or, ask random questions to the group and have each person answer it.

- Below are questions that we have used in the past.
- I suggest using 5-6 questions depending on the size of your group.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF...

1. You could become an animal for one day?
2. You could go anywhere in the world for a week?
3. You could go back in time for a week?
4. You could be someone else for a week?
5. You could have any job you wanted?
6. You could be invisible for a day?
7. You could spend the day with anyone you wanted?
8. You could change one thing in your past?
9. You could change one thing about yourself?
10. You could audibly hear God answer one question you asked?

(Continued...)

ICE BREAKERS

RANDOM

1. What's one thing you're afraid of?
2. What one quality do you look for most in friends?
3. When was the last time you cried? Why did you cry?
4. Share one of the happiest days of your life.
5. What do you want to be doing in ten years?
6. What do you like most about yourself?
7. In what ways do you act like a child?
8. What do you like to do in your spare time?
9. What is something that really "bugs" you?
10. Where would you like to go for a vacation if you could go anywhere in the world?
11. What makes you laugh?
12. What is your favorite room in your house? Why?
13. What would you like to invent to make life better?
14. Where would you most like a shopping spree?
15. What would you do if you knew you couldn't fail?

"ME, TOO!"

This is a great way to get a group to open up and start talking about themselves while learning how much they have in common with each other. Remember, the focus is to share little tidbits of information about yourselves.

Supplies needed: Spool of twine or string at least 100ft long for each group of 8-10

Give each group a spool of string. Note: If your group is larger than 10, you'll want to break up into smaller groups of 8-10 people.

Choose someone to start by telling their group something about him/herself such as:

- My favorite color is green.
- I like to sing in the shower.
- I have two children.
- I dip my pizza in ranch dressing.

Once the person with the string says something that applies to another person in the group, that person calls out, "Me, too!" The first person holds on to the end of the string and passes the spool to the other person. If more than one person has a "me, too" then the string passes to all those people, and ends at the last person to say "me, too." The person with the ball of spool then says something else about him/herself. In the end, a group will end up with a web of connections. Point out how much you have in common with each other.