

# Love and Live...



## Parables and Stories of the Bible

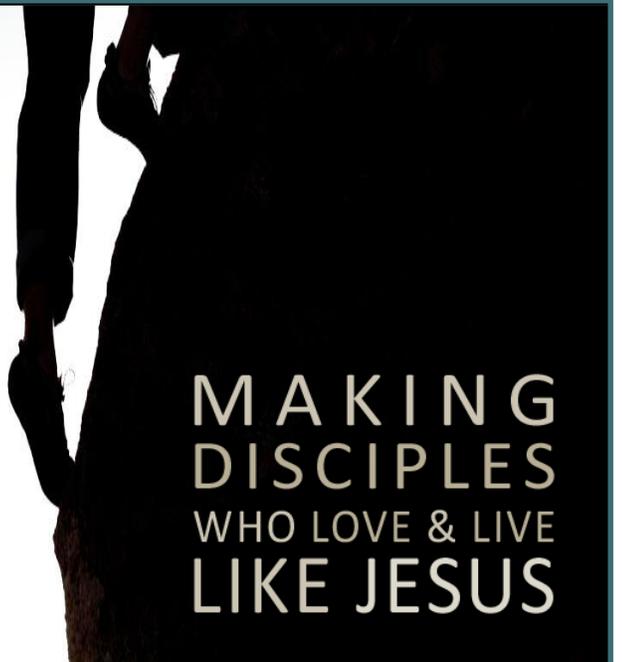


Riverside Church LIFEGROUPS

### **VOLUME 13**

Spring 2016

The Life of Jesus  
Part 2



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

Attend

Connect

Serve

Share

Lead



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# Table of Contents

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## STORY SET LIST

FIND THIS STORY SET ONLINE AT [riversidechurch.org](http://riversidechurch.org)

*When there are multiple scriptural references, feel free to choose which reference you'll use, OR better yet, try to get a volunteer for each reference. This will really demonstrate how these are the same story, just from different perspectives/witnesses.*

WEEK 1	JOHN 5:1-15	JESUS HEALS A LAME MAN WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET WELL?
WEEK 2	MATTHEW 8:28-34 MARK 5:2-20 LUKE 8:27-39	JESUS HEALS THE DEMON-POSSESSED WHY ARE YOU BOTHERING ME JESUS?
WEEK 3	TELL YOUR STORY	<b>Why tell our stories?</b> It gives us the opportunity to share who we are, where we've come from, and how God has worked in our lives over the years. It gives us compassion and understanding for others, allowing us to more easily extend grace and care for each other. This is part of how we become "family."
WEEK 4	TELL YOUR STORY	
WEEK 5	MATTHEW 9:18-26 MARK 5:21-43 LUKE 8:40-56	JESUS HEALS IN RESPONSE TO FAITH WHO TOUCHED ME?
WEEK 6	MATTHEW 13:53-58 MARK 6:2-6 LUKE 4:16-30	JESUS REJECTED IN NAZARETH WHAT MAKES HIM SO GREAT?

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<b>WEEK 7</b>	MARK 6:7-13 LUKE 9:2-6 MATTHEW 10:5-42 (Read)	JESUS SENDS OUT THE 12 DISCIPLES SHEEP AMONG WOLVES
<b>WEEK 8</b>	MATTHEW 14:13-21 MARK 6:30-43 JOHN 6:1-15	JESUS FEEDS THE FIVE THOUSAND WHAT DO YOU HAVE?
<b>WEEK 9</b>	GROUP SOCIAL	

This is a time to have fun together and to share and celebrate some of the things you've learned or ways you have seen God at work in your lives over the past year.

## SUGGESTIONS:

BBQ	Progressive Dinner	Game Night	Group worship and fellowship
Bowling	Dessert Buffet	Potluck	Campfire and s'mores

Over the summer, be sure to plan more fun times together, especially if you're not going to meet weekly. We will provide a short story set from the gospels for groups that plan to continue meeting over the summer.

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# Small Group Ground Rules

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## 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.

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# Small Group Ground Rules

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**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.

**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 affecting 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 onto 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.

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# LETTER TO THE FACILITATOR

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My Friends,

\*[FIND THIS STORY SET ONLINE AT riversidechurch.org](http://riversidechurch.org)

I hope you all have enjoyed exploring the life and lessons of Jesus in all four Gospels. We continue along this path throughout the spring.

**Like the winter story set, some weeks have more than one scriptural reference**, drawing the Gospels together and giving a broader picture of each story. Just as at the scene of an accident, there are sometimes different perspectives and details given in the different accounts. We can embrace any differences with curiosity, rather than doubt or fear, understanding that each witness tells the story from his own recollection of what was inspiring or most important. Our hope is that, when there are multiple scriptural references, you'll try to get a volunteer for each reference to tell the story from a slightly different perspective. However, we realize that isn't always feasible, especially in new groups, so feel free to just choose one to tell, and perhaps just read the others.

We again challenge you (and your groups) to look at what may be very familiar stories with fresh eyes. God's Word is truly living. Ask Him to reveal something new to you. What is God showing you as you hear the various accounts of each story?

We hope you are encouraging your folks to participate in the "Digging In" exercises. Try mentioning them during group and then including them in your weekly email/prayer request list. You can just copy and paste them from the Riverside's website\*. They're designed to help us develop a passion for delving into God's Word, study from a place of curiosity, and grow in our relationships with God and others.

Continue to challenge your group members to step out of their comfort zones and get involved: reading scripture, opening or closing in prayer, telling the story, organizing a social or a service project, sending out the prayer requests, etc. This helps others feel a part of this community; it helps create "buy-in" and a safe environment where it's okay to try new things. Look for opportunities to really care for your group members, asking God, "How can I model your love?" While it's important that you model caring for others in your group, encourage others to step into that role as well. Are they calling each other or checking in with each other periodically and especially during hard times? Prayerfully raise-up apprentices and branch your small group when it's ready, making more room as there's a need. **Frequent vision casting is really key** to preparing your group and maintaining alignment. Be sure to ask for help if you need it.

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# LETTER TO THE FACILITATOR

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Like last summer, we will provide a short story set for those groups who choose to continue to meet. We encourage all of you to plan some fun times with your groups over the summer. You might try meeting at someone else's house for a change. You may just find a future host home for when you branch! Think of it as shifting gears rather than taking a break.

It is my prayer that you continue to lead with love and purpose and that you truly enjoy the relationships you're building with others as you grow in your knowledge and love for Jesus. I am so thankful I get to "run the race" with this awesome team.

Standing and serving beside you,  
Ron

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Pastor of Spiritual Formation  
Riverside Church  
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ron@riversidechurch.org

*"Pursue faith and love and peace, and enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts." 1 Timothy 2:22b*

*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us." Hebrews 12:1*

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# LETTER TO THE FACILITATOR

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## BRIEF GOSPEL HISTORIES

The following is included in the story background of week 1.  
I've included it here so you can review it before you get started.

*Much of this information is paraphrased from The Touchpoint Bible by Tyndale House Publishers.*

As we move through the four Gospels, it is important and interesting to note that these are four accounts of Jesus' life, written by four very unique authors with different audiences in mind.

Before **Matthew** became a follower of Jesus, he was a rich tax collector, corrupt and spiritually bankrupt. As a disciple, he was transformed. He wrote his account of Jesus' life between A.D. 60 and 65 for the Jewish people, including Joseph's long family history all the way back through King David to Abraham. It includes numerous quotes and references to the Old Testament, emphasizing that the Jesus he followed was indeed the Messiah foretold by the ancient prophets.

**Mark** wrote for the fast-paced, action-oriented Roman Christian society and was the young man who went with Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey that we will read more about in Acts. Chronologically, Mark is the first gospel written and is a short book that focuses more on miracles and action stories than Jesus' teachings. Many scholars believe that Peter was actually the eye witness for Mark's account.

**Luke** was a doctor and one of Paul's close companions. His Gospel account records a detailed account of Jesus' birth and includes many references to diseases and diagnosis. Luke also focuses on Jesus' compassion, his relationships with people, and the role that various women played in his life. While Matthew wrote about the King, Luke wrote about the Great Physician. Many scholars believe Luke was Greek, making him the only gentile writer in the New Testament.

**John** probably wrote his account between A.D. 85 and 90, a time when Christians were being heavily persecuted throughout the Roman Empire and needed encouragement. John was one of Jesus' 12 disciples and seems to have had an especially close friendship with Jesus. He writes more eloquently about love than any of the other Gospel accounts, focusing more on the kind of person Jesus was and is than on what he actually did. Clearly in awe of his Creator and Savior, John's account is described more as a descriptive portrait of Christ than a biography of his life. Often this is the book new believers are told they should read first.

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# FACILITATOR resources

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## VISION CAST

- This is where you remind the group why we are here and how we are going to accomplish what God has called us to do, the purpose of our small groups.
- It is important to vision cast periodically, maintaining alignment and helping the group prepare for the process of branching.

**Mission of Riverside Church:** To make disciples who love and live like JESUS

**Discipleship Process:** Create Intentional Relational Environments where people grow in their relationships with God and each other.

## BASIC COMPONENTS IN THE DISCIPLESHIP PROCESS

### **Intentional Leader**

Small Group Facilitators who intentionally guide, nurture and love the people in their groups.

### **Biblical Foundation**

Studying & applying God's words through the stories of the Bible.

### **Relational Environment**

Intentionally creating an environment where people can share what God is showing them, so they can grow in their maturity in Jesus.

### **Reproducible Process**

An Intentional Leader creates a Relational Environment with a Biblical Foundation and raises up an apprentice so that the group can branch as it grows.

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# FACILITATOR resources

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## SMALL GROUP BASICS

- Especially when you're starting a new group, it's important to go over the basics of your small group.
- Also, pass around a sheet for each person to list the contact information they want shared with the group. Then make copies or email it out to the group.

### OUR SMALL GROUP

- When we start and end
- Our general format (Example: Fellowship, Worship, Study, Prayer Requests, Refreshments)
- “Storying”  
Jesus is the Master Storyteller. We practice Biblical Storytelling because this is one of the ways Jesus revealed God’s Truth. It helps us to apply scripture to our own lives and share our hearts with others. It teaches us how to tell the stories to others so we can show them God’s love.
- Logistics
  - Where to park
  - How childcare is provided (or not)
  - Snack list (allergies?)
  - How we will contact each other
  - Pass around a notepad. Ask people to list the contact information they feel comfortable sharing with the group, so you can pass out a contact list next week.
  - Caring for each other in crisis/need (meals, hospital visits, etc.)
  - Inviting new people, etc.
- Courtesies
  - Let your facilitator know if you can’t make group or if you have to leave early.
  - Keep interruptions to a minimum by silencing cell phones and answering urgent calls/texts in another room.
- Ground Rules  
We use the ground rules to help create a loving environment that promotes authenticity. They are more guidelines than rules.

#### FACILITATOR

Review the Ground Rules/guidelines. Consider discussing why they’re important.

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# WEEK 1

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## JESUS HEALS A LAME MAN

WOULD YOU LIKE TO GET WELL?

### JOHN 5:1-15

#### PRAY

#### THERE'S NO HURRY:

If you are starting a new group, or you have a lot of new people, be sure to spend some time vision casting and going over the basics for your small group (See the last few pages). Don't worry if you don't actually get to the story this week. You can start "Week 1" next week. There's a reason why the stories are not dated. We remain flexible, keeping in mind the needs of the group and the leading of the Holy Spirit.

#### 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

- We ended the last story set with the Jesus calming a storm.

#### BACKGROUND TO THIS WEEK'S 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.

As we move through the four Gospels, it is important to understand and interesting to note that these are four accounts of Jesus' life, written by four very unique authors with different audiences in mind.

Before **Matthew** became a follower of Jesus, he was a rich tax collector, corrupt and spiritually bankrupt. As a disciple, he was transformed. He wrote his account of Jesus'

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# WEEK 1

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life between A.D. 60 and 65 for the Jewish people, including Joseph's long family history all the way back through King David to Abraham. It includes numerous quotes and references to the Old Testament, emphasizing that the Jesus he followed was indeed the Messiah foretold by the ancient prophets.

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Picking up with our story.....While traveling through Galilee, the Galileans welcomed Jesus, and he healed an official's son. *THIS is where our story begins.*

## TELL THE STORY

### JOHN 5:1-15

#### 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.

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# WEEK 1

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## 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 Jesus healed you—your heart, health, finances, relationships, etc.?
- Where or how do you need to be healed right now?
- What do you learn about Jesus in this story?
- Where does legalism seep into your own life, hindering you from loving others or following Christ?
- How does this story challenge you in your current beliefs or circumstances?

## THE NEXT STORY

**MATT. 8:28-34, MARK 5:2-20 & LUKE 8:27-39 JESUS HEALS THE DEMON-POSSESSED**

### FACILITATOR

- Encourage the group to read the stories at least once before next week.
- Unless you have just branched or started a new group, **ASK FOR VOLUNTEERS TO TELL THE NEXT WEEK'S STORY/IES** (*When there are multiple scriptural references, feel free to choose which reference you'll use, OR better yet, try to get a volunteer for each reference. This will really demonstrate how these are the same story, just from different perspectives/witnesses*). Encourage and remind them that it's just telling the story, not memorizing it. Hopefully your apprentice is telling many of the stories by now, but especially as we study the Gospels and often draw from more than one book, continue to ask for volunteers. **Anyone can story! Don't miss this great opportunity to disciple others.** We're always encouraging and inviting people to "get in the game," take a risk, and get out of their comfort zones.

## 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.

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# WEEK 1

## PRAY

## DIGGING IN

### FACILITATOR

- Try taking a screen shot of this and sending it to the group in a group text or email. Or find this story set online at [riversidechurch.org](http://riversidechurch.org) and copy and paste this into your Meeting Notes when you record attendance on *Church Teams* each week. Then you can send it out in a group email along with the group's prayer requests.
- 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...

For archeological facts and more interesting information on the Pool of Bethesda, Google search "The Bethesda Pool Biblical Archaeology Society Staff" where you'll find a recent article published on 12/03/2015.

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## WEEK 2

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# JESUS HEALS THE DEMON-POSSESSED

WHY ARE YOU BOTHERING ME JESUS?

MATTHEW 8:28-34, Mark 5:2-20  
& LUKE 8:27-39

### 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 of Jesus healing a lame man.
- 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 WEEK’S 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.

Jesus had just calmed the storm we read about at the end of the last story set. He and the disciples have now arrived on the other side of the lake in the land of the Gerasenes. *THIS is where our story begins.*

### TELL THE STORY

**MATT. 8:28-34, MARK 5:2-20 & LUKE 8:27-39 JESUS HEALS THE DEMON-POSSESSED**

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# WEEK 2

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*Note: There is a discrepancy in the accounts as to how many demonic people Jesus healed. Hopefully this stirs up a healthy curiosity, as it would with anyone listening to various witnesses. Rather than getting tied into a big discussion about that right now though, try to keep the group focused on a heart-level question and refer them to an interesting article that addresses this at the end of this lesson. Consider reading it together as a group after your regular discussion. See “DIGGING IN” below.*

## 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 ever *not* welcomed God's presence in your life?
- What wonderful things has God done in your own life, and how can you share that with others?
- How do you respond when you see or hear about a miracle?
- What does this story reveal to you about Jesus?
- How does this story challenge you in your current beliefs or circumstances?

## THE NEXT STORY

### TELL YOUR STORY

#### FACILITATOR

- Next week tell your own stories.

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# WEEK 2

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- Explain that you'll take about 15-20 minutes to share highlights of your own lives: the key things that shaped you and brought you to where you are and who you are today—**the ways God has been working in your lives.**
- If you have not done this in your group before, model by going first.
- **Especially if this is new to your group:** Try to create an intimate/campfire-type atmosphere. Consider sharing a meal or dessert together around a large table while sharing stories or even sitting around a campfire if you're able.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

### FACILITATOR

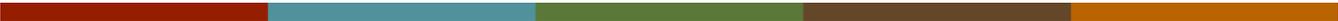
- Encourage the group to keep it personal and brief, allowing others time to share their praises and requests.
- Explain that they are invited to share if God has put something on their heart, but they don't have to have something to share every week.

## PRAY

## DIGGING IN

### FACILITATOR

- Try taking a screen shot of this and sending it to the group in a group text or email. Or find this story set online at [riversidechurch.org](http://riversidechurch.org) and copy and paste this into your Meeting Notes when you record attendance on *Church Teams* each week. Then you can send it out in a group email along with the group's prayer requests.



## WEEK 2

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- 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...

Was there one demonic person or two? Is this a contradiction in the Bible? Check out one scholar's response at <http://www.gotquestions.org/one-two-demoniacs.html>.

See [http://rickwarren.org/devotional/english/the-bible-is-historically-accurate\\_520](http://rickwarren.org/devotional/english/the-bible-is-historically-accurate_520), as well as <https://carm.org/can-we-trust-new-testament-historical-document> for information about the Bible's general historical accuracy.

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# WEEK 3

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## YOUR STORY

### PRAY

#### FACILITATOR

- Invite others to open or close the group in prayer.

### 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?”

### TELL YOUR STORY

#### FACILITATOR

- Explain that you’ll take about 15-20 minutes to share highlights of your own lives: the key things that shaped you and brought you to where you are and who you are today—**the ways God has been working in your lives.**
- If you have not done this before in your group, model by going first.
- Ask for volunteers.
- Depending on the dynamics of the group, sometimes it’s fun to let the person who tells a story pick the next “volunteer.” Be careful not to pressure someone to tell their story, though.

### THE NEXT STORY

#### CONTINUE TO TELL YOUR STORIES

#### FACILITATOR

- Ask for volunteers.
- Remind them to share highlights of their own lives (15-20 minutes): the key things that shaped them and brought them to where they are and who they are today—**the ways God has been working in their lives.**

### PRAYER REQUESTS

#### FACILITATOR

- Encourage the group to keep it personal and brief, allowing others time to share their praises and requests.

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# WEEK 3

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- 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

- Try taking a screen shot of this and sending it to the group in a group text or email. Or find this story set online at [riversidechurch.org](http://riversidechurch.org) and copy and paste this into your Meeting Notes when you record attendance on *Church Teams* each week. Then you can send it out in a group email along with the group's prayer requests.
- 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...

How do you tell your own story? Here are some great helps:

<http://evangelism.intervarsity.org/how/conversation/30-minutes-shareable-testimony>

<http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god/what-we-get-wrong-about-giving-our-testimony>

<http://rickwarren.org/devotional/english/share-your-testimony-of-gratitude>

<http://www.cru.org/train-and-grow/how-to-tell-your-story-worksheet.html>

[http://www.nextworldwide.org/site/c.8qLKK0MELkI2F/b.7906147/k.A43D/Sample\\_Testimony.htm](http://www.nextworldwide.org/site/c.8qLKK0MELkI2F/b.7906147/k.A43D/Sample_Testimony.htm)

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# WEEK 4

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## YOUR STORY

### PRAY

#### FACILITATOR

- Invite others to open or close the group in prayer.

### 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?”

### TELL YOUR STORY

#### FACILITATOR

- Explain that you’ll take about 15-20 minutes to share highlights of your own lives: the key things that shaped you and brought you to where you are and who you are today—**the ways God has been working in your lives.**
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- Ask for volunteers.
- Depending on the dynamics of the group, sometimes it’s fun to let the person who tells a story pick the next “volunteer.” Be careful not to pressure someone to tell their story, though.

### THE NEXT STORY

#### **MATT. 9:18-26, MARK 5:21-43 & LUKE 8:40-56 JESUS HEALS IN RESPONSE TO FAITH**

#### FACILITATOR

- Encourage the group to read the stories at least once before next week.
- Unless you have just branched or started a new group, **ASK FOR VOLUNTEERS TO TELL THE NEXT WEEK’S STORY/IES** (*When there are multiple scriptural references, feel free to choose which reference you’ll use, OR better yet, try to get a volunteer for each reference. This will really demonstrate how these are the same story, just from different perspectives/witnesses*). Encourage and remind them that it’s just telling the story, not memorizing it. Hopefully your apprentice is telling many of the stories by now, but especially as we study the Gospels and often draw from more than one book, continue to ask for volunteers. **Anyone can story! Don’t miss this great opportunity to disciple others.** We’re always encouraging and inviting people to “get in the game,” take a risk, and get out of their comfort zones.

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# WEEK 4

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## 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

- Try taking a screen shot of this and sending it to the group in a group text or email. Or find this story set online at [riversidechurch.org](http://riversidechurch.org) and copy and paste this into your Meeting Notes when you record attendance on *Church Teams* each week. Then you can send it out in a group email along with the group's prayer requests.
- 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...

Practice telling your story to a friend, and then ask God for an opportunity to share what he has done in your life with someone new.

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# WEEK 5

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## JESUS HEALS IN RESPONSE TO FAITH

WHO TOUCHED ME?

MATTHEW 9:18-26, MARK 5:21-43  
& LUKE 8:40-56

### 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 Jesus healing the demon-possessed.

### BACKGROUND TO THIS WEEK’S 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 directly after our last story, where Jesus healed the demonic people and then crossed back to the other side of the lake.

### TELL THE STORY

**MATT. 9:18-26, MARK 5:21-43, & LUKE 8:40-56 JESUS HEALS IN RESPONSE TO FAITH**

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# WEEK 5

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## 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.

- Who do you most relate to in this story?
- When did God intervene in your life after you had given up, and what did that teach you about Him?
- If there's been a time in your life when it felt like Jesus never "showed up" (maybe even now), what is God telling you about that right now?
- How does this story challenge you in your current circumstances?

## THE NEXT STORY

**MATTHEW 13:53-58, MARK 6:2-6 & LUKE 4:16-30    JESUS REJECTED IN NAZARETH**

### FACILITATOR

- Encourage the group to read the story at least once before next week.
- Unless you have just branched or started a new group, **ASK FOR VOLUNTEERS TO TELL THE NEXT WEEK'S STORY/IES** (*When there are multiple scriptural references, feel free to choose which reference you'll use, OR better yet, try to get a volunteer for each reference. This will really demonstrate how these are the same story, just from different perspectives/witnesses*). Encourage and remind them that it's just telling the story, not memorizing it. Hopefully your apprentice is telling many of the stories by now, but especially as we study the Gospels and often draw from more than one book, continue to ask for volunteers. **Anyone can story! Don't miss this great opportunity to disciple others.** We're always encouraging and inviting people to "get in the game," take a risk, and get out of their comfort zones.

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# WEEK 5

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## 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

- Try taking a screen shot of this and sending it to the group in a group text or email. Or find this story set online at [riversidechurch.org](http://riversidechurch.org) and copy and paste this into your Meeting Notes when you record attendance on *Church Teams* each week. Then you can send it out in a group email along with the group's prayer requests.
- 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...

Is there anything in this story that has you curious? Write down one or two questions you have about the story. Google search "[www.biblegateway.com/resources/all-women-bible/Jairus-Daughter](http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/all-women-bible/Jairus-Daughter)" and "[www.biblegateway.com/resources/all-women-bible/Woman-Issue-Blood](http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/all-women-bible/Woman-Issue-Blood)" for all sorts of context on this passage.

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# WEEK 6

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## JESUS REJECTED IN NAZARETH

WHAT MAKES HIM SO GREAT?

### MATTHEW 13:53-58, MARK 6:2-6 & LUKE 4:16-30

#### PRAY

FACILITATOR

- Invite others to open or close the group in prayer.

#### 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 last story we looked at was the story of Jesus healing in response to faith.
- 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 WEEK’S 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 healing Jairus’ daughter, he taught the people many stories. Then, Jesus and his disciples returned to his hometown, Nazareth. *This is where our story begins.*

#### TELL THE STORY

**MATTHEW 13:53-58, MARK 6:2-6 & LUKE 4:16-30    JESUS REJECTED IN NAZARETH**

# WEEK 6

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## 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.

- What's it like to share your faith with your own family or people you grew up with?
- How would you answer the skeptic's question, "What makes *Him* so great?"
- When have you seen God at work around you and been amazed by others' unbelief?
- Where is it hardest for you to live out your own faith?
- How does this story challenge you in your current circumstances?

## THE NEXT STORY

**MARK 6:7-13, LUKE 9:2-6 & MATTHEW 10:5-42 (Read)**

**JESUS SENDS OUT THE 12 DISCIPLES**

### FACILITATOR

- Encourage the group to read the story at least once before next week.
- Unless you have just branched or started a new group, **ASK FOR VOLUNTEERS TO TELL THE NEXT WEEK'S STORY/IES** (*When there are multiple scriptural references, feel free to choose which reference you'll use, OR better yet, try to get a volunteer for each reference. This will really demonstrate how these are the same story, just from different perspectives/witnesses*). Encourage and remind them that it's just telling the story, not memorizing it. Hopefully your apprentice is telling many of the stories by now, but especially as we study the Gospels and often draw from more than one book, continue to ask for volunteers. **Anyone can story! Don't miss this great opportunity to disciple others.** We're always encouraging and inviting people to "get in the game," take a risk, and get out of their comfort zones.

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# WEEK 6

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## 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

- Try taking a screen shot of this and sending it to the group in a group text or email. Or find this story set online at [riversidechurch.org](http://riversidechurch.org) and copy and paste this into your Meeting Notes when you record attendance on *Church Teams* each week. Then you can send it out in a group email along with the group's prayer requests.
- 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...

In Luke 4:18-19, Jesus is quoting Isaiah 61:1-2. To better understand the relevance of this quote, read Isaiah chapters 60-62. What is the context here? What do you believe Jesus was proclaiming in the Temple?

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# WEEK 7

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## JESUS SENDS OUT THE 12 DISCIPLES

### SHEEP AMONG WOLVES

## MARK 6:7-13, LUKE 9:2-6 & MATTHEW 10:5-42

### 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 the story of Jesus rejected in Nazareth.
- 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 WEEK’S 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.

Jesus had earlier told his disciples that he felt great pity for the crowds that came to him—their needs were so great. Like sheep without a shepherd, though, they didn’t know where to go. He said, “The harvest is so great, but the workers are so few” (Matt. 9:37) and urged them to pray God would send out more workers. Now, he has called together his twelve disciples and has given them the authority to heal every kind of illness and to cast out evil spirits. He is addressing: Simon (Peter), Andrew, James (son of Zebedee), John, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James (son of Alphaeus), Thaddaeus, Simon (the Zealot), and Judas Iscariot. *THIS is where our story begins.*

# WEEK 7

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## TELL THE STORY

### **MARK 6:7-13, LUKE 9:2-6 & MATTHEW 10:5-42 (Read) JESUS SENDS OUT THE 12 DISCIPLES**

#### 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.

- How can you personalize Jesus' command, "Give as freely as you have received"?
- In your own circumstances, how do you need to be as shrewd as a snake and harmless as a dove?
- When have you been given the opportunity to teach others about Christ under surprising or unpleasant circumstances?
- Do you expect persecution for your faith? Why or why not?
- What is Jesus sending *you* out to do?

## THE NEXT STORY

### **MATT. 14:13-21, MARK 6:30-43 & JOHN 6:1-15    JESUS FEEDS THE FIVE THOUSAND**

#### FACILITATOR

- Encourage the group to read the story at least once before next week.
- Unless you have just branched or started a new group, **ASK FOR VOLUNTEERS TO TELL THE NEXT WEEK'S STORY/IES** (*When there are multiple scriptural references, feel free to choose which reference you'll use, OR better yet, try to get a volunteer for each reference. This will really demonstrate how these are the same story, just from different perspectives/witnesses*).

# WEEK 7

Encourage and remind them that it's just telling the story, not memorizing it. Hopefully your apprentice is telling many of the stories by now, but especially as we study the Gospels and often draw from more than one book, continue to ask for volunteers. ***Anyone can story! Don't miss this great opportunity to disciple others.*** We're always encouraging and inviting people to "get in the game," take a risk, and get out of their comfort zones.

## ALSO...

- ➔ Start planning your GROUP SOCIAL—your end of the year celebration. It's just 2 weeks away! **If there are folks in your group who want to be baptized, consider working that into your celebration.** Ask for help if you're not sure what that would look like.

Make some time to have fun together before shifting gears into all the summer activities. Share and celebrate some of the things you've learned or ways you have seen God at work in your lives over the past year.

## SUGGESTIONS:

BBQ	Progressive Dinner	Game Night	Group worship and fellowship
Bowling	Dessert Buffet	Potluck	Campfire and s'mores

## 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.

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# WEEK 7

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## PRAY

## DIGGING IN

### FACILITATOR

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- 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...

Jesus sends out more disciples in Luke 10. Read Luke 10:1-16. Now compare this to Matthew 10:5-42. What do you notice about Jesus' instructions? How can you apply this to your own life?

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# WEEK 8

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## JESUS FEEDS THE FIVE THOUSAND

WHAT DO YOU HAVE?

MATTHEW 14:13-21, MARK 6:30-43  
& JOHN 6:1-15

### 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 the story of Jesus sending out the disciples.
- 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 WEEK’S 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.

When King Herod married his brother’s wife, Herodias, John the Baptist told him repeatedly that it was illegal to marry his brother’s wife. Although this enraged Herodias, and she wanted John killed, she was powerless without Herod’s approval. Herod respected John as a good and holy man. Although his words disturbed Herod, he enjoyed listening to John. So, Herod had John arrested and imprisoned as a favor to his wife, and then he kept John under his protection. Herod made a grave mistake, though. On his birthday, Herod was so pleased with the dance his daughter performed for him at

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# WEEK 8

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his party, that he offered her anything she wanted, up to half the kingdom. Her mother advised her to ask for John the Baptist's head on a tray, and so she did. Although the king was very embarrassed and sorry to do it, he sent an executioner to fulfill the request. When John's head was presented to the girl on a tray, she took it to her mother. John's disciples collected his body and buried it. Then, they told Jesus what had happened. *THIS is where our story begins.*

## TELL THE STORY

**MATT. 14:13-21, MARK 6:30-43 & JOHN 6:1-15    JESUS FEEDS THE FIVE THOUSAND**

### 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.

- What has Jesus asked you to do that looks impossible?
- When has God multiplied what you have given Him?
- How can you lovingly allow others to be desperate enough to need Jesus in a miraculous way?
- What has Jesus asked you to share with others?
- What do you learn about your own relationship with Jesus from this story?

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# WEEK 8

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## NEXT WEEK

GROUP SOCIAL: Finalize your plans.

Make some time to have fun together before shifting gears into all the summer activities. Share and celebrate some of the things you've learned or ways you have seen God at work in your lives over the past year.

## SUGGESTIONS:

BBQ	Progressive Dinner	Game Night	Group worship and fellowship
Bowling	Dessert Buffet	Potluck	Campfire and s'mores

## 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

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# WEEK 8

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## DIGGING IN

### FACILITATOR

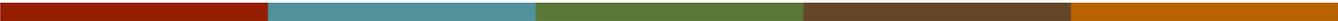
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- This is an opportunity for group members to do some further Bible study on their own, if they choose to. The desire is to help them find a passion to get into the Bible and study it for themselves from a place of curiosity.

### On your own this week...

Read 2 Kings 4:1-7 and watch the YouTube "Widow and Oil" video at:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UFj22\\_9-lg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UFj22_9-lg)

- What does this story have in common with this week's story in John 6:1-15?
- How might these stories have been different if the widow and the disciples had tried to figure this out on their own and not asked for help?
- Evaluate the needs in your own life: What do you have? What do you need? What is God asking you to do?



## WEEK 9

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### GROUP SOCIAL

Have fun together before shifting gears into all the summer activities. Share and celebrate some of the things you've learned or ways you have seen God at work in your lives over the past year.

Over the summer, be sure to plan more fun times together, especially if you're not going to meet weekly. We will provide a short story set from the gospels for groups that plan to continue meeting over the summer.

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# Ice Breakers

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## 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 be a child again for one day?
2. You could go anywhere on a cruise?
3. You could be invisible for a day?
4. You could choose one food you could eat anytime without ever gaining any weight?
5. You could live anywhere in the world?
6. You could interview anyone you wanted?
7. You could save only 2 *things* in your home from a fire?
8. You could have one super power?
9. You could fix one thing in your life?
10. You could visit heaven for a day?

(Continued...)

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# Ice Breakers

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## RANDOM

1. What's one thing in life that makes you feel crazy?
2. What makes a father great?
3. When was the last time you laughed until you cried?
4. Share one of the most memorable days of your life.
5. What do you want to be remembered for?
6. What do you like most about Florida?
7. Where is your "happy place?"
8. What is your favorite thing to do on Saturdays?
9. What is something that you've always wanted to do?
10. What other country would you love to visit?
11. What kind of a driver are you?
12. What is your season and why?
13. What piece of technology can you just not live without?
14. When have you felt really loved?
15. What have you been completely surprised?

## "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 flavor ice cream is salted caramel.
- I like to garden.
- I have two dogs.
- I remember when TV was just black and white.
- I love bike riding.

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.

