

# Love and Live...



## Parables and Stories of the Bible



Riverside Church LIFEGROUPS

### **VOLUME 14** Summer 2016

Parables of the  
New Testament

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

Attend

Connect

Serve

Share

Lead

# Table of Contents

## STORY SET LIST

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

For the **summer**, we have built in more group social time.  
Try our **fun** activities, or come up with your own!



Include the whole family for some of these, and consider getting your Life Group together with another Life Group once or twice. We especially love getting together with our branched groups —a family reunion of sorts!

### WEEK 1

LUKE 8:4-15

THE FARMER SCATTERING SEED

### WEEK 2

FIESTA GAME NIGHT



### WEEK 3

MATTHEW 18:21-35

THE UNFORGIVING DEBTOR

### WEEK 4

BBQ & POTATO POTLUCK



### WEEK 5

MATTHEW 20:1-16

THE VINEYARD WORKERS

### WEEK 6

TELL YOUR STORY

### WEEK 7

TELL YOUR STORY

#### Why tell our stories?

It gives us the opportunity to share who we are, where we've come from, and how God is working and 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."

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WEEK 8      LUKE 14:15-24      THE GREAT FEAST

WEEK 9      PRAYER, PRAISE & PIE NIGHT



LIFE GROUP LEADER TRAINING AUGUST 14<sup>TH</sup>

WEEK 10      LUKE 15:11-32      THE LOST SON

WEEK 11      MOVIE & ICE CREAM SOCIAL



We will continue The Life of Jesus  
with our Fall Story Set.  
It kicks off in September, following [GROUP LINK](#).

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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.

# LETTER TO THE FACILITATOR

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My Friends,

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

I'm really excited for our summer schedule. Part of doing life together is playing together—having fun! This year I've purposefully scheduled in a lot of social time. You can try our **fun activities** or come up with your own. Include the whole family for some of them, and consider getting your Life Group together with another Life Group once or twice. We especially love getting together with our branched groups—a family reunion of sorts!

**The Summer Story Set** is a short collection of Parables from the New Testament. You'll notice that we've provided a few questions for each story and a blank line. I encourage you to write in your own heart-level question for each story. Keep it open-ended (so they can't answer with "yes" or "no") and on a heart-level (keeping it personal and not knowledge-based). Try not to lead them to something you want them to learn, but rather, keep it open enough to give the Holy Spirit room to reveal whatever He may. Sometimes the simpler the question, the more profoundly they hear God.

I've included two weeks for telling **your own stories**. Encourage those who have not shared yet to tell their stories, but even those who have already shared can share again. We all have many stories of how God has worked or is continuing to work in our lives. These are the stories that give the reason for the hope that is within us--the stories that can draw others we know to Christ! Life Group is a great place to practice telling them.

**Life Group Leader Training will be held on AUGUST 14<sup>TH</sup>**. So that you are not doubled up with time away from your family, our Life Groups will not meet that week. I hope that you'll make every effort to be there and that you'll invite your apprentice/apprentice-candidate to the training as well.

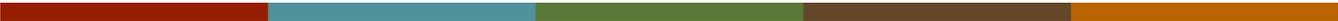
**The Fall Story Set** will start in September, right after Group Link, and will continue with The Life of Jesus in the Four Gospels. Thanks for all you do, all the time you give, and all the ways you love your people. Enjoy your summer and have some fun!

Standing and serving beside you,  
Ron

Ron Detwiler  
Pastor of Spiritual Formation  
Riverside Church  
208-818-2677  
ron@riversidechurch.org

*"... Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have..."* Taken from 1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

*"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."* John 13:34-35 (NIV)



# LETTER TO THE FACILITATOR

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## THE FARMER SCATTERING SEED

### LUKE 8:4-15

#### PRAY

#### REVIEW GROUP GROUND RULES

How we practice loving each other

*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?”

#### BACKGROUND TO THIS WEEK’S STORY

*FACILITATOR*

This will help you set up the story each week.

Throughout the Gospels, we observe that often when Jesus spoke to the people, he used stories. The following is one of those stories. *Listen and understand...*

#### TELL THE STORY

##### LUKE 8:4-15 THE FARMER SCATTERING SEED

*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*

While we have provided a few questions, **try to write in your own HEART QUESTION** for your group, keeping in mind that it should be FROM A PLACE OF CURIOSITY AS TO WHAT GOD IS SHOWING THEM, rather than a desire to teach them something.

# WEEK 1

## SUGGESTIONS

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

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- How is your "soil" right now?
- What does this story tell you about seeds you are planting?
- How is God asking you to respond to this story?

## NEXT WEEK

### FIESTA GAME NIGHT!

All you need is Mexican finger foods and a variety of games.

1. Plan your games: Decide what kind of games you want to include and ask volunteers to bring them. They can be big group games like Taboo, Apples to Apples or Guesstures, or a variety of board/card games that folks can cycle through when/if they want, such as Phase 10, Clue, Sequence, Jenga, and Parcheesi.
2. Plan your food: Pass around a sign-up sheet for food.  
Easy ideas:
  - Chips (Lots!)
  - Salsa (Various--especially homemade!)
  - Guacamole
  - Mexican layered dip
  - Nachos
  - Chicken flautas
  - Stuffed jalapeños or jalapeño poppers
  - Veggie tray with dip
  - Sopaipillas
  - Churros
  - Mexican Brownies
  - Drinks
3. Ask a volunteer to send out a reminder email to everyone in the group. Getting people involved in group responsibilities creates buy-in and is an important way to help people feel connected.

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# WEEK 1

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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...

Jesus told the disciples that He is concealing everything about the Kingdom of God from outsiders so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled. He is referring to Isaiah 6:9. Read Isaiah 6:1-13 and look it up in a reliable commentary (e.g. Matthew Henry's Commentary) to better understand the importance of this reference. How can you be sure you have eyes to see and ears to hear as you read and listen to God's Word?

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# WEEK 2

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## FIESTA GAME NIGHT



PRAY

PLAY AND EAT

THE NEXT STORY

**MATTHEW 18:21-35 THE UNFORGIVING DEBTOR**

FACILITATOR

- **ASK FOR A 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.

PRAY

# THE UNFORGIVING DEBTOR

## MATTHEW 18:21-35

### PRAY

### REVIEW GROUP GROUND RULES

How we practice loving each other

*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?”

### BACKGROUND TO THIS WEEK’S STORY

*FACILITATOR*

This will help you set up the story each week.

Throughout the Gospels, we observe that often when Jesus spoke to the people, he used stories. When the disciples asked Him why He did this, He explained, “You are permitted to understand the secret about the Kingdom of God. But I am using these stories to conceal everything about it from outsiders” (Mark 4:11). “To those who are open to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But to those who are not listening, even what they have will be taken away from them. That is why I tell these stories, because people see what I do, but they don’t really see. They hear what I say, but they don’t really hear, and they don’t understand” (Matt. 13:12-13 NLT). *May YOU have eyes to see and ears to hear as you listen to one of Jesus’ stories.*

### TELL THE STORY

#### MATTHEW 18:21-35 THE UNFORGIVING DEBTOR

*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 3

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## THE QUESTIONS

### FACILITATOR

While we have provided a few questions, **try to write in your own HEART QUESTION** for your group, keeping in mind that it 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.

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- Who do you most closely relate to in this story?
- What do you learn about God in this story?
- How is God challenging you with this story?

## NEXT WEEK

### BBQ & POTATO POTLUCK!

1. Decide on your location. Consider meeting at someone else's house, a park or the beach.
2. Decide what you'll barbeque. Ideas: Chicken, ribs, burgers, Italian sausage or brats. Or consider "grill your own" and everyone brings their own meat.
3. Pick your potato! Potato potlucks are fun because there are so many ways to serve potatoes—including lots of family secret recipes—and most people can come up with an idea on the spot. Ideas: potato salad, au gratin, mashed, roasted, Hasselback, wedges, potato skins, chips, pancakes, and doubled baked. You can even host a baked potato bar where people sign up for all different toppings. As long as you have a few desserts and side salads, people can bring a wide variety of potato sides to share and everyone will be happy.
4. Pass around a sign-up sheet for food and ask someone to send out an email reminder with the list. Getting people involved in group responsibilities creates buy-in and is an important way to help people feel connected.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

### FACILITATOR

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# WEEK 3

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- 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...

Forgiveness can be hard, and sometimes it's really, really hard. Often it is misunderstood. People might think that to forgive means they have to "forget" what happened, "let it go" without any consequences (not to be confused with revenge), or even excuse or condone it, as if nothing harmful was done. These aren't God's ideas of forgiveness, though.

Search "forgiveness" at [biblehub.com](http://biblehub.com) to see what God's Word has to say, and Google "Focus on the Family Learning to Forgive Others" for more biblical perspective.

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# WEEK 4

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## BBQ & POTATO POTLUCK



PRAY

EAT & VISIT

THE NEXT STORY

**MATTHEW 20:1-16 THE VINEYARD WORKERS**

FACILITATOR

- **ASK FOR A 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.

PRAY

## THE VINEYARD WORKERS

### MATTHEW 20:1-16

#### PRAY

#### REVIEW GROUP GROUND RULES

How we practice loving each other

*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?”

#### BACKGROUND TO THIS WEEK’S STORY

*FACILITATOR*

This will help you set up the story each week.

Throughout the Gospels, we observe that often when Jesus spoke to the people, he used stories. When the disciples asked Him why He did this, He explained, “You are permitted to understand the secret about the Kingdom of God. But I am using these stories to conceal everything about it from outsiders” (Mark 4:11). “To those who are open to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge. But to those who are not listening, even what they have will be taken away from them. That is why I tell these stories, because people see what I do, but they don’t really see. They hear what I say, but they don’t really hear, and they don’t understand” (Matt. 13:12-13 NLT). *May YOU have eyes to see and ears to hear as you listen to one of Jesus’ stories.*

#### TELL THE STORY

**MATTHEW 20:1-16 THE VINEYARD WORKERS**

*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 5

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## THE QUESTIONS

### *FACILITATOR*

While we have provided a few questions, **try to write in your own HEART QUESTION** for your group, keeping in mind that it 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.

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- Who do you most closely relate to in this story?
- What do you learn about God in this story?
- How is God challenging you with this story?

## NEXT WEEK

### TELL YOUR STORY

#### FACILITATOR

- Next week tell your own stories.
- 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

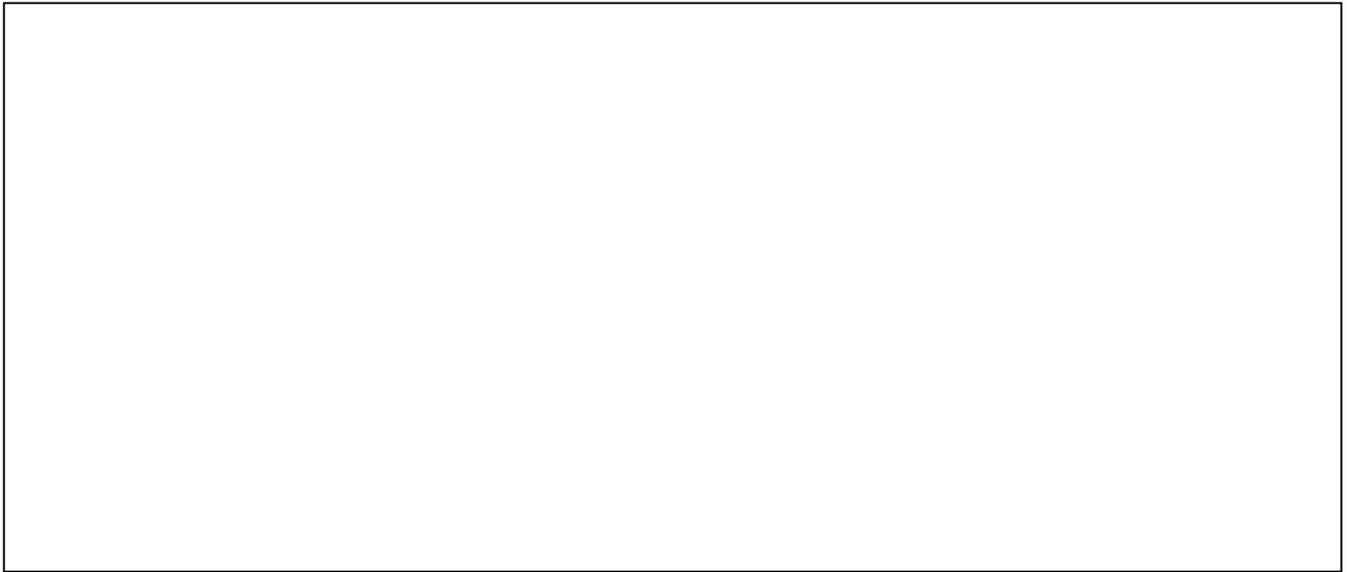
### *FACILITATOR*

- 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.

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# WEEK 5

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## 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...

Read two more of Jesus' vineyard stories: Matthew 21:28-44. Spend some time considering each story. What new understanding is God giving you? How can you personalize these stories? Look for an opportunity to share one of these stories with someone this week.

## 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 6

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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)

## 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

#### LUKE 14:15-24 THE GREAT FEAST

#### FACILITATOR

- **ASK FOR A 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.

### 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 7

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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

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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...

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.

## THE GREAT FEAST

### LUKE 14:15-24

#### PRAY

#### REVIEW GROUP GROUND RULES

How we practice loving each other

*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?”

#### BACKGROUND TO THIS WEEK’S STORY

*FACILITATOR*

This will help you set up the story each week.

Jesus was at a dinner party and noticed that everyone was trying to sit near the head of the table. He advised his disciples not to always head for the best seat where they may be asked to move should someone more respected also be invited. He urged them to sit at the foot of the table where they might be invited to move into a more honored seat, explaining that the proud will be humbled, but the humble will be honored. He continued teaching them about humility. “When you put on a luncheon or a dinner,” he said, “don’t invite your friends, brothers, relatives, and rich neighbors. For they will repay you by inviting you back. Instead invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. Then at the resurrection of the godly, God will reward you for inviting those who could not repay you” (Luke 14:8-14 NLT). *This is where our story begins.*

#### TELL THE STORY

**LUKE 14:15-24 THE GREAT FEAST**

*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.

# WEEK 8

## THE QUESTIONS

### FACILITATOR

While we have provided a few questions, try to write in your own HEART QUESTION for your group, keeping in mind that it 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.

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- Who do you most relate to in this story?
- What do you learn about God in this story?
- How is God challenging you with this story?

## NEXT WEEK

### PRAYER, PRAISE AND PIE NIGHT!

1. Plan your praise. Ideas: Someone can bring a guitar and lead, you can invite someone to come lead worship, or you can play worship music electronically. It's really helpful if song sheets can be prepared and passed out. Ask for a volunteer to head this up.
2. Plan your prayer time. Let folks know you'll be spending a significant period of time praying for each other. If they come with a prayer request written on an index card ahead of time, it'll save more time for actually praying. Be sure to let them know that nobody will force them to pray in front of the group—only if they want to.
3. Pass out a sign-up sheet for desserts. It doesn't have to be a pie!

## PRAYER REQUESTS

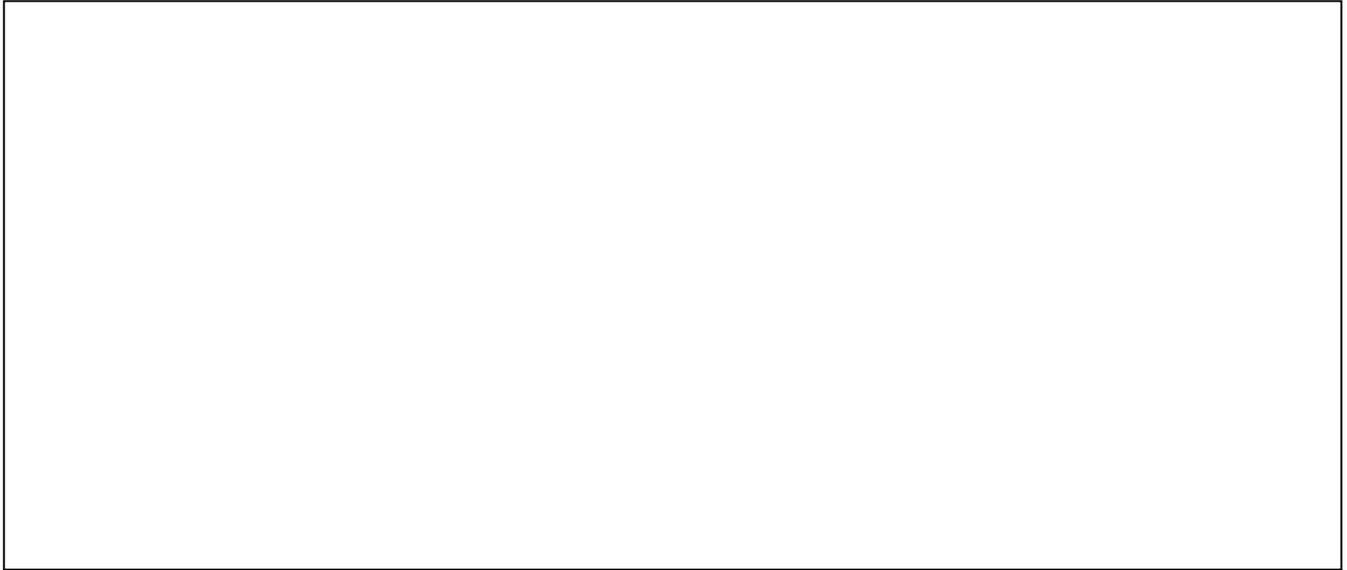
### FACILITATOR

- 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 8

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## 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...

Read Matthew 22:1-14. What is God showing you in this story?



## PRAYER, PRAISE & PIE NIGHT



### PRAY

#### Praise and Worship time.

Whether someone is leading the worship or you're listening to worship music and singing along, try to have song sheets available and plan a good amount of time (30 minutes or so) to just worship together.

**Prayer.** An option: Since some people might not feel comfortable praying in front of a group, have everyone write down a prayer request on an index card and then place them in a basket. Pass the basket around and allow those who want to pray to choose a card (or more if you have extras). Allow people to pray when and as they feel led. Try to save a significant amount of time for the actual praying (30-45 minutes).

**Pie and fellowship.** Try to save about a ½ hour for just sitting around visiting and eating together.

### THE NEXT STORY

#### LUKE 15:11-32 THE LOST SON

#### FACILITATOR

- **ASK FOR A 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.

### PRAY

## THE LOST SON

### LUKE 15:11-32

#### PRAY

#### REVIEW GROUP GROUND RULES

How we practice loving each other

*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?”

#### BACKGROUND TO THIS WEEK’S STORY

*FACILITATOR*

This will help you set up the story each week.

The teachers of religious law complained that Jesus was associating with the tax collectors and notorious sinners who came to listen to him. So Jesus began to tell 3 stories. The first was about the lost sheep. The second was about the lost coin. To further illustrate His point, He begins to tell the story of the lost son. *This is where our story begins.*

#### TELL THE STORY

**LUKE 15:11-32 THE LOST SON**

*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

While we have provided a few questions, try to write in your own HEART QUESTION for your group, keeping in mind that it 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.

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- Who do you most relate to in this story?
- What do you learn about God in this story?
- How is God challenging you with this story?

## NEXT WEEK

### MOVIE & ICE CREAM SOCIAL

Plan your movie night. Will you go out for a movie and ice cream or stay in?

If you plan to watch a movie at someone's house, pass out a sign-up sheet for the ice cream, toppings, and drinks and decide which movie and where. Ask a volunteer to send out a reminder email to everyone in the group.

Movie ideas:

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| War Room                 | Soul Surfer              |
| Second Hand Lions        | Courageous               |
| The Blind Side           | Seabiscuit               |
| Do You Believe?          | Chariots of Fire         |
| Ratatouille              | The Book of Eli          |
| Old Fashioned            | Facing the Giants        |
| Fireproof                | God's Not Dead           |
| Amazing Grace            | Chicken Run              |
| The Chronicles of Narnia | Up                       |
| Inside Out               | Faith of Our Fathers     |
| Cheaper By the Dozen     | The Help                 |
| The Vow                  | The Ultimate Gift        |
| Flywheel                 | My Big Fat Greek Wedding |
| Garfield                 | Grumpy Old Men           |

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# WEEK 10

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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...

Read Luke 15:1-10, the first two "lost stories." When have you looked this hard for something...and why? Do you believe God pursued you diligently when you were lost...and even now? How easy is it to find Him? How often do you search Scripture for His truth, for wisdom, for His love for you? How does this challenge you in your relationship with Him?

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# WEEK 11

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## MOVIE & ICE CREAM SOCIAL



Enjoy your end of the summer celebration!  
We hope you've enjoyed some extra fun times  
with your group.

### NEXT WEEK

If somehow you're ahead of schedule, go ahead and tell your stories or plan another fun group activity.

We will continue The Life of Jesus  
with our Fall Story Set.  
It kicks off in September, following [GROUP LINK](#).

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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.

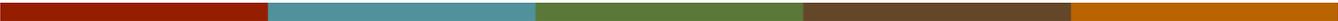
Supplies needed: Spool of twine or string at least 100ft long for each group of 8-10

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.



# Ice Breakers

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