

Note to Leaders: Storying

A New Approach to Group Study

this is life:

A people apprenticed to
the Life of Jesus

This fall we are introducing an approach to group Bible study called “storying.” This approach intentionally asks leaders to be less of a “Bible teacher,” and more of a story-teller and discussion facilitator. The goal is very intentionally to do less communicating of prepared content to the group, and more drawing out the thoughts, questions and reflections of the group in relation to the Scripture, in a safe and intentional environment.

There are several advantages to this model:

1. It aims to bring stories to life in a new way.
2. It is designed to draw out the thoughts, questions and reflections of the group in relation to the Scripture, not just to present prepared content. It therefore helps the leader to know the sheep.
3. It is a method that is easily modeled and learned, assisting in the raising up of new leaders.
4. It is a method that is transferable to many contexts, including one-on-one disciple-making, Apprentice Groups, and other conversations over Scripture.

We encourage some version of the following model.

Step 1: Welcome/Connection

- Make sure new believers, newcomers, and members feel welcomed and valued.
- Think about intentional ways to get to know group members and to help group members get to know one another.
- It’s even ideal for your group to share a meal together regularly as the beginning of your time together.

Step 2: Opening Prayer(s)/Worship

- Acknowledge the presence of God’s Holy Spirit and invite him to lead your time.
- Prepare your heart for God’s Word to you tonight.
- Shift your attention from individual fellowship to a unified focus on God.

Step 3: Cast Vision

- ❑ Reaffirm the group for being part of a group, and encourage them that pursuing growth as apprentices of Jesus happens best, and most authentically, in community with others.
- ❑ Remind people of our common goal → This will include an openness to others joining us, to growing up new leaders, and to multiplication.

Our common goal
as apprentices of Jesus
is to learn
**to be loved by Jesus,
to be led by Jesus,
to become like Jesus,
to lead others to Jesus.**

Step 4: Establishing "Safe Harbour"

Remind the group: *For us to open up to God and one another, the environment needs to be safe, and we each need to be safe for each other. Let's remember the following guidelines:*

- ❑ Respect *confidentiality*: (1) what's shared here, stays here; (2) when you don't have permission to share with others (in or beyond meeting), don't!
- ❑ *Listen* well; be aware of the impact of your body language and tone of voice.
- ❑ Offer *grace, patience* and the benefit of the doubt.
- ❑ Don't rush to fill *pauses* or *silence*.
- ❑ Don't "*cross talk*" (side conversations apart from the group's discussion)
- ❑ Respect *sharing boundaries* (don't share what you don't have permission to share)
- ❑ Tell *your own story* (not someone else's)
- ❑ Don't fix/problem-solve or rescue; practice "*gospel fluency*."
- ❑ Participate fully; be a *learner* (not a know-it-all) and welcome all questions.
- ❑ Accept responsibility for *peace*, seeking swift *reconciliation* of conflict and *making amends* for hurts caused.

Step 5: Instructions for Participants

Offer the following instructions:

- ❑ As I tell this story, and then we look at it in detail, I encourage you to stay personally engaged.
- ❑ As you hear the story, focus on *who or what you relate to in the story, and why*.

Step 6: Storying

Set the Scene: Provide a **brief context** for the story. (This will often be provided in the available study guide.) Say something like, “This story is from the Gospel of Luke, chapter 6. It happens shortly after Jesus...”

Tell the Story: The goal is to help the listeners pay attention to the text, not as words on a page, but as a **living account** of something that happened. Without worrying about perfection, **tell the chosen story “from memory”** – not a word-for-word memorization of a certain translation, but as a remembered story. When you are finished, simply say, “And that’s the story.”

Rebuild the Story: The goal is for group members to **pay attention to the details** of the story. Invite the group to open up their Bibles to the chosen passage. Walk through, chronologically, verse by verse, asking “**Who, What, Where, When, How, and sometimes Why**” questions. Invite them to point out **where the story-teller (you) added or omitted a detail**. This is not the time to make personal or additional commentary. You are simply establishing the facts as they appear in the text.

Read the Story: The goal is to take all the pieces as you have observed them, and **put them back together** into one story again. So once more, read the story once through as it appears in whatever translation you are working from.

Debrief the Story: The goal is draw out the **thoughts, reactions, and possible personal applications** of the story for each group member, considering **Head** (facts), **Heart** (personal disclosure) and **Hands** (obedience). The questions intentionally give the opportunity for a **variety of answers**, lessening the risk of speaking out a “wrong” answer. Always begin with the first question, and try to give every member of the group an opportunity to respond. However, don’t go around the circle one at a time, as this may put more introverted people, who need a moment to form their thoughts, on the spot. Always end with the last question.

- **Who or what do you relate to in the story, and why?**
- What picture or description caught your attention or came to mind as you listened?
- What can we learn about God (Father, Jesus, and/or Holy Spirit) from this story?
- What can we learn about humanity (us) from this story?
- What can this story tell us about apprenticeship to Jesus?
- What other Scriptures or biblical principles does this story remind you of?
- How could you share this story with someone to help them grow in apprenticeship to Jesus?
- How will you apply this story in your own life? What is your “take-away”?
- **What specific action do you sense God asking you/us to do as a result of our conversation with Him through his Word?**

These questions may be slightly altered or added to depending on the specific passage provided. At times, the discussion may raise additional questions. Leaders should be somewhat prepared to respond, to look for answers between meetings, or to ask others in the group to look for answers.

Step 6: Prayer for One Another

One of your goals as an apprentice-making leader is to equip your group to pray like Jesus prayed. Rather than just taking requests and diving in, use the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) as a guide, and based on what has come to the surface in your sharing together, lift one another to God in prayer.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>WORSHIP</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.</p>	<p>Express your thanks and praise to your heavenly Father for his work in your lives.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>PETITION</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Your Kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.</p>	<p>Invite God to be King in the various areas of your life, as well as for practical needs, people far from God, the church’s mission and its leadership.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>CONFESSION</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.</p>	<p>Repent of any sin, express forgiveness regarding any broken relationship, and ask for God’s help in bringing reconciliation wherever it is needed.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>ENGAGEMENT</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.</p>	<p>Ask God to lead, protect and heal you wherever it is needed. Give time to listen and respond to the Spirit’s voice.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>WORSHIP</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.</p>	<p>Close by praising God for who he is, and for anticipated opportunities and answers to prayer.</p>

Step 7: Set the Stage for Next Meeting

- Confirm the time and location.
- Confirm the “story-teller” and the Bible story that will be shared. Once you’ve modeled this a few times for the group, try to personally encourage other members of the group (especially those with leadership potential) to give it a try.

