



# THE SUMMER OF STORIES

Sharing our stories - found within God's story





# SHARING STORIES

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God is always writing stories in the lives of those following Jesus! When we hear stories from others about the ways God has moved in their lives it can be an encouragement to us and others on our journey of following Jesus. It also helps us to be more aware of how the Spirit is moving in our own lives!

We all have different levels of experience when it comes to talking about God's action in our lives. It can be challenging for most people.

Yet, it is so important to grow in this skill. As we grow, we get more comfortable sharing our stories with our friends and neighbors. It also provides a way to have spiritual conversations with those who may be curious about Jesus or faith.

This resource is a collection of tools to support storytelling among those in your group. Feel free to discern and utilize what is helpful. Not every tool will be helpful for every storyteller and the format can be adjusted based on what is best for your community.





## GROUP GATHERING OUTLINE

When a community or group is gathering, it's important to find the balance between organized and organic. Here is an option for how to outline the organized portion of a time together. Depending on time, you may need to skip some sections. Feel free to contextualize this outline to your specific group:

**Community Time** - Pick a question that people can answer in pairs or smaller groups to get them connecting.

**Scripture Time** - Pick a Biblical story from the listed examples on the next page or any story you'd prefer and encourage dialog in smaller groups using the discussion questions.

**Story Time** - Have one or two people be prepared to share using one of the storytelling formats.

- Before they start, share the story-hearer commitments with the group (on the next page)
- Consider the time frame you have for your gathering and use a timer on a phone if needed since storytellers often don't realize how much time is passing.

**Question and Response Time** - If the storyteller is open to it, create space for the group to ask questions about the storyteller's experience as well as respond.

- Good questions - Can you say more about \_\_\_\_? What did it feel like when \_\_\_\_? How has your faith changed since you experienced \_\_\_\_? What were the deepest learnings from your experience? How does it feel to share this experience with us?
- Good responses - Express to the storyteller, "What was meaningful to me about your story was..." "What caught my imagination in the story was..." "Where I saw God at work in your life was..." "Thank you for telling your story, I appreciate how you..."
- If your group is large, you may want to share responses in smaller groups so everyone can share and then bring those back to the larger group to share with the storyteller.

**Gratitude and Prayer Time** - Express gratitude to the storyteller(s) and offer to pray for them.





## **Story-hearer Commitments:**

1. Listen fully - as fully as possible to the story teller. With your ears, mind, and heart.
2. Express gratitude - thank the storyteller for their courage to share.
3. Commit to confidentiality - do not share this person's story without their permission.
4. Offer to Pray - offer to pray for the storyteller since it is vulnerable to share about your life.

## **New Testament Stories**

Centurion - Matthew 8:5-13

Zaccheaus - Luke 19:1-10

Road to Emmaus - Luke 24:13-35

Samaritan Woman - John 4:1-26

Peter - John 21

Peter and Cornelius - Acts 10

Philip and the Eunuch - Acts 8:26-40

Paul and Lydia - Acts 16

## **Scripture Reflection questions:**

- What is highlighted for you from the stories? What seems to stick out?
- How do you imagine that the main characters experienced transformation?
- What does this story highlight about how God moves, leads, or speaks?
- Does anyone have an experience in their life that this story brings to the surface?





## TOOLS FOR STORYTELLERS

**It is often said that God is telling a grand story and we get to be a part of it. That means the stories in our lives are a part of God's story if we choose to join in!**

Many, if not most, people feel intimidated telling stories about their personal lives to a group. Even more difficult is figuring out what God's role has been in that story, and articulating it. However, being able to talk about how God's spirit is moving in our lives is an important part of our lives as disciples of Jesus. We can never be 100% sure what is God's action. Just like the early church in Acts, we seek the Kingdom, and when it looks, tastes, sounds or feels like God - we move towards it!

As we grow, we get more comfortable sharing our stories with our friends and neighbors. It also provides a way to have spiritual conversations with those who may be curious about Jesus or faith. This resource has tools for storytelling that can come alongside you at any level of experience. Take some time to pray about what stories God may lead you to tell, then take courage and be willing to offer the story to your community!

### **Stories worth telling:**

- A time in your life where you experienced growth or transformation.
- A day, week, or season that was deeply meaningful from the last year or two.
- An experience you had sharing your faith or having a spiritual conversation.
- A time you experienced God's goodness in faith and community this last year or in the past.
- A time when you could see how God answered your prayer (even if it wasn't how you had hoped).
- An encounter with God that revealed God's goodness to you.
- A time where you learned something meaningful that changed your perspective.
- A time that you experienced reconciliation in a relationship.
- A situation where healing was experienced (emotionally, physically, spiritually).
- An experience that you may still be in the middle of, but you are noticing God's guidance and presence.

**The next few pages have tools that can equip you in preparing your story. Read through them and select the one that is the best fit for you!**





## **Transformation or Growth Story:**

- Name a transformational moment in your life:
- Describe the context of the moment:
- Name the people involved:
- What role do you think God played in the story?
- How did you experience God's presence/guidance/peace/leadership/etc?  
*(Often we have this awareness when we look back, even if we didn't at the moment)*
- How did you experience transformation and what does that look like now?
- How do you imagine this experience will shape your future?





# Narrative Arch Story Outline:

## Act 1 How things were going

Describe the reality before the significant event or series of events  
Introduce any characters and important context

## Act 2 What happened

Describe the significant event or series of events.  
Share how it impacted you emotionally, spiritually  
What was your awareness of God at that time?  
How might God have been involved?

## Act 3 The response and reaction

How did you respond to the event?  
How did others in the story respond?  
How did you experience Jesus in this response?  
How do you think God was involved now that you are looking back on the story?  
What steps were taken to move forward?  
What were you grateful for?  
What do you wish were different?

## Conclusion: Where it's at now

What did God teach you and what did you learn?  
What difference does this event make in your life now?  
How do you imagine this experience will shape your future?

**Note: see how this storytelling arch follows our 4-part story in the Big God Story:**

- Act 1 Creation
- Act 2 - Disruption
- Act 3 - Redemption
- Act 4 - Restoration







## **The Difference Jesus Makes Story:**

**Prepare answers to the following questions:**

- Why am I a Christian?
  
- How has Jesus made a difference in my life in the past?
  
- What difference does Jesus make in my life in the present?
  
- How do I think Jesus may be leading me into the near future?





## **Mad Libs Storytelling:**

The story unfolds in \_\_\_**(setting)**\_\_\_. It revolves around \_\_\_**(main characters in addition to you)**\_\_\_\_\_.

Things were going \_\_\_**(adjectives to describe how things were before the main event)**\_\_.

But then \_\_\_**(describe main event)**\_\_\_\_\_ .

This created \_\_\_**(problem or obstacles for characters)**\_\_\_\_\_ .

So that led to feeling \_\_\_\_\_**(describe emotions experienced by characters)**\_\_\_\_\_ .

I think God may have been \_\_\_\_\_**(describe how you experienced God and God's action in the story)**\_\_\_\_\_.

So I decided to \_\_\_\_\_**(describe how you and the other characters responded to the event)**\_\_\_\_\_.

This led to \_\_\_\_\_**(description of new reality)**\_\_\_\_\_.

What I learned was \_\_\_\_\_**(describe learnings)**\_\_\_\_\_.

What will be different going forward is \_\_\_\_\_ **(describe how the experience will shape your future)**\_\_\_\_\_.





## **Additional Tools**

### **Phrases to help describe what God may have been doing:**

- I think God may have been...
- The way I felt like I was experiencing God at the time was...
- Jesus was leading me to...
- I felt like the Holy Spirit was...
- What I think I saw God doing was...
- What I feel like I heard from the Lord was...
- It seems like God was working through...
- God's presence felt like...
- Joining in what I think God was doing looked like...





## **Spiritual Conversation Starters:**

### **SPIRITUALITY**

What role does spirituality play in your life?

### **PRACTICES**

Are there specific practices, rituals, rhythms, or experiences that are important to your spirituality?

What have your spiritual experiences been like?

### **MEANING**

What brings the most meaning and purpose to your life?

What shifts or changes have you made in your spiritual journey?

What would you say you care about most deeply?

### **GAP**

Is there a disconnect between how you are living now and how you want to live?

What are your biggest frustrations when it comes to your spirituality and/or spiritual needs?

What do you see in the world around you that you find the most heartbreaking?

### **JESUS**

Does Jesus make a difference in your life? If so, how? If not, what does make a difference in your everyday life?

*What questions would you add?*



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