



## WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Your Chapter In God's Never-ending Story

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### Week 1

#### Today's Theme:

- Because we are created in God's image, we already have great stories to tell. We need not be afraid to share them.

#### Scripture Verses:

- Genesis 1
- 1 Peter 3:15-16

#### Supplies:

- Story cubes
- Flipchart paper and marker to list differences between testimony and storytelling
- Notecards and pens

#### Opening Everyone Answers Question (10 minutes):

*You want to get everyone talking here. This will set the tone for the meeting and introduce the theme.*

- What was your favorite story as a child? Why? Note: This does NOT need to be a Bible story!

#### Scripture Exploration (25 minutes):

As we begin exploring storytelling, we're going to look at two key Scripture passages.

1. Skim the creation story in Genesis 1. Throughout Genesis 1, what work does God undertake?
  - a. *God creates*
2. Read Genesis 1:27. To you, what does it mean that God creates humankind in his image?

3. If we are created in God's image and God is a creator, does that mean that ALL people are also creators? In other words, are all people made to make? Why or why not?
4. *(Everyone Answers Question)* Be honest. Do you consider yourself to be a creator or even creative? Why or why not?
  - a. What experiences in your life have shaped your answer to this question?
  - b. What experiences or voices might lead people to conclude they are NOT creative?
5. All of Scripture tells God's story. It tells the story of creation, the world's brokenness, and God's redemption of the world. How, if at all, are you a part of the story that God is telling?
6. Because we are created in God's image, we all have great stories to tell. Do you agree or disagree with this? Why?
  - a. What barriers might people need to overcome in order to become free to share their story with others?
7. *(Everyone Answers Question)* On a scale of 1-5 with 1 being "It's my forte" and 5 being "I'm horrible at it", how easy or difficult is it for you to share stories about your faith experiences with others? Why?
  - a. What experiences in your life have shaped your answer to this question?
8. What is a testimony?
9. Read 1 Peter 3:15-16 (see below), one of the passages that's often used to describe testimony:

*"But in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; <sup>16</sup>yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame."*

Describe your reaction to 1 Peter 3:15-16.

- a. What does it mean to "sanctify Christ as Lord"?
- b. In this passage, "defense" is used as a synonym for testimony. Describe your reaction to this. How, if at all, might thinking of your faith story as a "defense" make it difficult to share it with others?
- c. What is the "hope that is in you"?

- d. When sharing your testimony with others, why is it important to do so with gentleness and reverence?

**10.** What, if anything, is the difference between testimony and storytelling?

*You may want to create a table on a large piece of paper to list the differences side by side. Here are some of the answers your group might suggest. The paragraph that follows should provide direction for the group in the coming weeks for the stories we hope to share. **The stories will likely combine some elements of both testimony and storytelling, using scripture as a model for telling each person's own, authentic story within God's larger story.***

- a. *Testimony (In a typical sense of the word, which often carries baggage for Lutherans) =*
  - i. *Personal story of where God is meeting you; Always about your faith*
  - ii. *Carefully reasoned and thought-out, often memorized and sometimes rehearsed*
  - iii. *Often formulaic, about how your life has changed since you began following Jesus*
  - iv. *Gentle to you, but often NOT to the person you're sharing it with. Sometimes feels like bullying to the person you're sharing it with*
  - v. *To the person who's listening to you, a testimony can feel like you've got an agenda.*
  
- b. *Storytelling =*
  - i. *Personal*
  - ii. *Entertaining*
  - iii. *May reflect a slice of a story rather than a whole story*
  - iv. *Parts of the story may be embellished to enhance its entertainment quality*
  - v. *Not necessarily connected to your faith*

Throughout our ten weeks together, we want to explore the stories of Scripture so that we find ourselves in them and learn how to better tell our own stories. What we're looking for isn't a testimony. We don't want you to follow a formula, or something that looks like "Before I met Jesus I was... Then I met Jesus... And now my life is great." What we're asking you to do is also not merely storytelling. **Instead, we want you to mine your own life for stories of significance – whether or not they immediately seem to be related to your faith.** We hope you'll vulnerably entrust your small group with these stories. When you do, we believe that we'll grow in community and that whether or not your story seems to be connected to your faith, you'll experience a living God. Your story's unfolding and if you don't stop and share it, you might miss it.

## **Storytelling Practices: (20 minutes)**

*Each week, we'll provide you with different storytelling practices designed to help your small group practice sharing their stories.*

### **Storytelling Practice #1: Storytelling Cubes**

You'll do this storytelling practice in community. The goal of this exercise is simply to get people creatively telling stories. The first person will roll the Story Cubes. They'll then begin telling a story using the prompts on their cubes. Once they've done this, they'll pass the story onto the next person along with their cubes. That person will then continue crafting the group's story. Play repeats until everyone in the group has contributed to the story. The last person needs to conclude the story, once again using the items on their Story Cubes.

### **Storytelling Practice #2: Mining Your Family Stories**

Because we are created in God's image, we already have great stories to tell. Some of your greatest stories are those involving your family. Think, in particular, about those stories that have been passed down to you generationally, that have influenced who you are. On an index card, write down a few key words or draw a picture that reminds you of some of your family's stories.

## **Storytelling:**

Your small group leader will direct you in sharing the stories you reflected on during the practices. Consider sharing all or part of your faith story at our **What's Your Story?** storytelling event on November 17.

*After giving your small group a few minutes to reflect on their family stories, invite people to share the family stories they've thought of.*

*As people share, encourage people to think about sharing all or part of their faith story at our Storytelling Event on November 17.*

## **Processing / Wrap-Up: (10 minutes)**

1. How easy or difficult was it for you to participate in tonight's storytelling practices?
2. What was scary or intimidating to you about tonight's storytelling practices?
3. What did you learn about yourself from tonight's storytelling practices? About others in our small group?
4. As you thought about your own story, where did you see God at work?
5. Where did you encounter God during tonight's small group?

## **Closing Prayer:**