



WHAT'S YOUR STORY?

Your Chapter In God's Never-ending Story

Week 9

Today's Theme: Great stories don't always have happy endings or turn out the way we expect or hope.

Scripture Verses: Luke 24:13-35

Supplies:

- Paper, pens, colored pencils
- Paper, pens, white out

Opening Everyone Answers Question: (10min)

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

- Think of a book you've read or a movie you've watched that had a happy ending that felt forced. What made that ending feel forced? How, if at all, might the story have been MORE powerful if it had a different ending?

Scripture Exploration: (25 minutes)

This is the part of the study that you'll dig into Scripture so as to draw out the day's theme.

1. Read Luke 24:13-14. Who are the two and what are they talking about?

Cleopas and another disciple of Jesus are talking about Jesus's death and supposed resurrection

2. Read Luke 24:15-16. What do you think it means that they were "kept from recognizing" Jesus?

Perhaps Jesus's features were altered. Or maybe he was somehow hiding his real identity from them. Or maybe they were so intent on their own conversation that they missed seeing who he really was.

- a. Tell us about a time when you felt as though you were unable to experience Jesus's presence in your story. What do you think prevented you from experiencing Jesus's presence?
3. Read Luke 24:17-20. How do you think these disciples expected Jesus's story to turn out? Why?

Many of Jesus's followers expected him to liberate them from the Roman occupation. Jesus's followers certainly did not expect Jesus to be put to death.

- a. Think about your story. Tell us about a time when your story ended unexpectedly.
 - b. What, if anything, has caused you to lose hope at various points in your story?
5. Read Luke 24:22-24. Do you think these disciples believe the women? Why or why not?
 - a. How, if at all, might the women's story restore these followers hope?
6. Read Luke 24:25-27. What do you think Jesus's tone is here? Why?
7. Read Luke 24:28-32. Why do you think the breaking of the bread is what finally enables these disciples to recognize Jesus?
 - a. During times when Jesus seems hidden from your story, what typically allows you to recognize his presence: Experience, Knowledge, or something else altogether? Why do you think this is?

Storytelling Practices (20 minutes):

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

Storytelling Practice 1: Your Emmaus Road

By placing yourself on the road to Emmaus, you may find that this opens up memories for you about times where you've experienced loss, hardship, and that you may have become open to new perspectives like those who heard from the women that angels said that Jesus was alive.

Search your own life and see where you might find a small story about a long journey, a meaningful discussion with family or friends, a time of tragedy, a time of wonder at amazing things around you, a moment of joy, or some other aspect of the story On the Road to Emmaus.

Make a few notes about your story ideas. It could be a poem too. Or use pens and pencils (or another medium) to create a picture that represents part of your story that is rooted in the story of the Road to Emmaus. How does this story represent hopelessness or a story that turned out differently than you expected it to?

Storytelling Practice 2: Whitewashed stories

From our earliest days as children, we learn that stories are supposed to have happy endings. Fairy tales begin with “Once upon a time” and inevitably, they end with “And they all lived happily ever after.”

Often, this is even worse in Christian circles, where it often feels as though we expect God to provide us with a happy ending; As if God somehow fails us if our story is LESS than happy.

However, there is actually a great deal of power in stories that involve hopelessness and heartbreak, those that, like Emmaus, don’t always turn out exactly how we expect them to.

Think about one part of your story that’s involved hopelessness or heartbreak or simply didn’t turn out the way you expected it to. Write out this part of your story with the ending you WISH it would have had. How did you expect or want this story to write out?

Now, use white out to erase the untrue parts of the story and replace them with how the story actually turned out. What is powerful about this version of your story?

When you share your story, share both endings to your story – the one you WANTED and the one you actually got.

Storytelling (20 Minutes):

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 stories, invite people to share their story using whatever storytelling practice they experimented with. Make sure people know they can share as much or as little of what they came up with as they’d like.

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

Processing / Wrap-Up (10 minutes):

1. Why do you think it is so tempting for us to ONLY want to tell those stories in our lives that have a happy ending? How might God use our stories of hopelessness or unhappy endings for the good of his kingdom?
2. How easy or difficult was it for you to participate in 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: