



# DISCOVER THE ART OF BIBLE STORYING

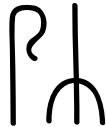
## Original Set of 21 Narratives



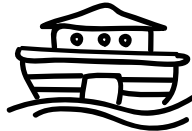
CREATION



REBELLION



CAIN & ABEL



THE FLOOD



THE COVENANT



ISAAC



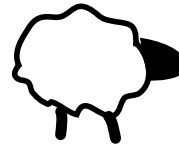
JACOB & ESAU



JOSEPH



MOSES



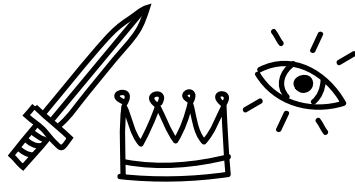
PASSOVER



LAWS & COMMANDS



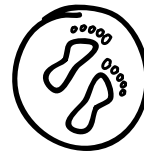
SACRIFICES



JUDGES, KINGS & PROPHETS



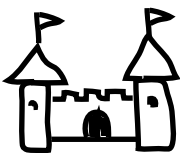
JESUS' BIRTH



BAPTISM & TEMPTATION



PHARISEES



THE KINGDOM



MIRACLES



THE NEW COVENANT



DEATH & RESSURECTION



THE CHURCH & NEW CREATION





# Storyteller Guidelines

*"We are not seeking to explain the idea of the text. The gospel is never an idea! The gospel is an event through which God enters our lives in Jesus Christ. We tell stories so that people can participate in this gospel reality."*

- from the book *Thinking in Story: Preaching in a Post-Literate World*, by Richard A. Jensen

**Live with the story.** Spend time in the story until the characters and setting become visual to you. Slow down and enjoy it as you read through the story several times. Picture the story in your mind—imagining the sounds, tastes, scents, and colors.

**Know the story.** Read the narrative over and over. Strive to be as accurate as possible in your retelling. The narratives we have provided are already condensed. Skipping parts of them can leave out key elements that connect with future stories. Practice the story—have others listen to you and help you if you miss parts.

**Stick to the story.** Don't mix other elements into your story from your knowledge of future stories that they have not yet heard.

**Tell the story from beginning to end—don't stop!** Stopping to answer a question, teach, clarify, give application, or make an observation causes confusion. Save it for the dialogue time.

**Speak simply and clearly.** Don't add lots of words. We have a tendency to try to be more descriptive and detailed than the text—don't. Good storytellers use less words and shorter sentences and allow space for listeners to imagine.

**Bring the story to life.** Storytelling is not just repeating what you read or hear; it is retelling a live event. If you read off the page with no feeling or life, you are not storytelling—you are reading.

**Be genuinely animated and enthusiastic!** Use gestures and facial expressions, but be sure they are appropriate and natural. Use your voice to create the atmosphere or tension as the story progresses.

**Be very careful about joking and sarcasm.** This can cause people to misinterpret the story and sidetrack them from the biblical meaning.

**Pacing** involves both the volume and rate at which you speak, as well as the progression of the action in the story. Dialogue slows a story's pace, while narrating action speeds it up.

**Repetition** has always been a basic element of storytelling—don't fear it because it is not as common in other forms of teaching.

**Tell stories with servanthood and sincerity.** We are privileged to tell God's story.

**Be patient with the process.** At first, people will think this process is too basic. After a few stories, people will realize that there is still much to be learned. It will take some time for others to get into the rhythm of this different approach to teaching.

**Relax and be yourself.** Develop your own style—one that you are comfortable with.



STORY FROM...

Genesis 1-2, Job 38:4-7, Psalm 8,  
Psalm 103:19-22, Isaiah 45 :18, 2 Peter 2:5, Jude 6

# Creation

▼ **NARRATE** (*Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!*)

This first Episode in God's Story, called "Creation," begins like this...

Before anything existed, there was an amazing and mysterious being called God. While God was creating the earth, angels watched with amazement, singing together and shouting for joy! God created these beautiful angels to worship him. But some of these angels rebelled against God and his ways – any rebellion against God is called sin. God doesn't allow sin to remain in his presence, so he sent the rebellious angels into darkness on the earth, to face final punishment later. (Pause)

Then God took the earth, which was dark and formless, and prepared it as a place for life.

*God's Spirit moved over the surface of the earth as...*

He made light – separating it from the darkness...

He divided the oceans and the sky...

He gathered the waters, so dry land would appear...

He grew plants, flowers, and trees... all with seeds in them so they could reproduce themselves...

He created the sun, the moon and the stars... then set the days and seasons into motion...

He filled the seas with fish, the sky with birds, and the earth with all kinds of wild animals!

God put great care and creativity into all of his creation. God looked at this and said, *"This is really good!"*

After he had prepared the earth, God decided he would create another being, one who was lower than the angels.

God said, *"We will make humans in our image, to be like us. We'll put them in charge of the earth, the plants and all the animals that live on it."* So God took dirt from the earth and formed this first human. Then, God breathed his own breath into him, giving him life. This first human would be called Adam.

God placed Adam in a beautiful garden, where he provided everything he needed. In this garden, God planted all kinds of trees that produced delicious fruit so Adam would always have plenty to eat. God gave Adam the responsibility to take care of this garden and all of the creatures that lived there. God even brought all of the animals right to Adam so he could give them names!

In the middle of the garden were two special trees – a Tree of Life, and a tree that could give Knowledge of Good and Evil. God told Adam to enjoy fruit from any tree in the garden – except for one; God warned him, *"If you eat fruit from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, you will definitely die."* (Pause)

Then God said, *"It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a partner who will help him."*

So God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. While Adam was asleep,

God removed one of his ribs and then closed up his side where it was taken from.

God used Adam's rib to form the first woman. When God brought her to Adam, Adam shouted, *"At last!"*

Adam called his new companion Eve, which means *"giver of life."*

So God created both the man and woman to be like him – created in God's own image.

God blessed Adam and Eve with the ability to continue his creation by having children.

God joined them in a close relationship as husband and wife, where they devoted themselves to each other.

Although Adam and Eve were naked, they felt no shame.

And God would come and spend time with the humans, walking with them in the cool of the day.

They lived under God's care and protection – a life that was full and complete.

As God looked over all of his creation he thought, *"This is excellent in every way!"*

After creating all of this, God rested... and set aside a day of rest each week for all of his creation.



STORY FROM...

Genesis 1-2, Job 38:4-7, Psalm 8,  
Psalm 103:19-22, Isaiah 45 :18, 2 Peter 2:5, Jude 6

# Creation

▲ **RETELL THE STORY** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*

▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- **What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?**
- **What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?**

- **What did God create in this story?**
- **How do you picture the world God created in this story? ...the garden?**  
**Was it chaotic or peaceful?** *They enjoyed God's shalom, the old testament word for peace, meaning relational wholeness and completeness that God intend's for all of his creation.*

- **How did God make humans unique among his creations?**  
*They are created in God's image. He breathed his own breath into them - they were created in a different way.*  
*He put them in charge of the earth and the animals (responsibility).*  
*God gives humans the ability to create by having children.*

- **What kind of relationship did God have with humans?**  
*He spent time with Adam and Eve. They loved being with God.*  
*He gave them responsibility—to care for God's creation and to create.*  
*He protected and cared for them. He came to earth to be with them!*

- **What kind of relationship did Adam and Eve have with each other?**  
**Why do you think that Adam and Eve were not ashamed of being naked?**

- **What do you think is significant about the two trees in the center of the garden?**

- **Did you hear anything that reminded you of the previous story?**

- **What do we learn about God in this story? (Where in the story did you see this?)**  
*God is all powerful. God is the creator of all things—birds, fish, air and land ...*  
*God created humans in his image.*  
*God trusts humans with the care of his creation.*  
*God gives humans the ability to create.*  
*God provides and takes care of humans—the garden had everything they needed.*  
*God is very relational - he comes down to walk with them in the garden.*  
*God enjoys his creation—he said it was excellent in every way!*  
*God sets aside time for rest!*

◆ **CONNECTION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*

- Why do you think God wants to spend time with humans?
- How do you think we are "created in the image of God"?
- What do you think God desires from us (you)?
- How has God provided for or protected you?
- What responsibilities does God intend for us to have?



STORY FROM...  
Genesis 1-3

# Rebellion

◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** *(Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)*

▼ **NARRATE** *(Don't just read it-know it and bring it to life!)*

One day, a clever serpent came to Eve and asked her, *"Did God really say you can't eat ANY of the fruit in the garden?"*

Eve told him, *"No, we can eat from any tree in the garden. It's only the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that we are not allowed to eat from—or even touch, or we will die."*

Trying to trick Eve, the serpent said, *"You won't die! God knows that as soon as you eat that fruit your eyes will be opened, and you will become just like him! You will know everything, both good and evil."*

Eve, believing the serpent, looked at the delicious fruit, and thought, *"Humm... we will know everything..."* Then she took some of the fruit and ate it. She also gave some to Adam, who was with her, and he ate it. Instantly, their eyes were opened, and they became filled with shame and fear. They tied fig leaves together to cover up their nakedness.

Later that day, Adam and Eve heard God walking in the garden, so they hid in some bushes.

God called to them, *"Where are you?"*

Adam answered, *"I heard you coming, and I was afraid... because I was naked, so I hid."*

God answered, *"Why are you ashamed of being naked? Did you eat the fruit I told you not to eat?"*

Adam said, *"It was the woman you gave me... she handed me the fruit."*

Then God said to Eve, *"How could you do this?"*

Eve replied, *"The serpent tricked me into eating the fruit."*

So God said to the serpent, *"Because you have done this, you and your kind will crawl on your bellies and eat dust the rest of your lives. You will be the enemy of women and their sons. As you bite at his heels, he will step on your head."*

God's heart was broken because of Adam and Eve's disobedience. God always does what is right and true; he could not ignore what they had done. So God punished Adam and Eve by throwing them out of the garden – outside of his care and protection. No longer following God's ways, Adam and Eve were now subject to sickness, pain, and even death.

God told them, *"The way you have chosen to live will now bring you great struggles..."*

*...women will have sharp pains while giving birth.*

*...men will have to work hard and sweat just to produce a little food from the ground.*

*...and you'll both fight to control your relationship.*

*...then, you'll return to the ground from which I created you." (Pause)*

Even though God punished Adam and Eve, he did not stop loving them.

He even created clothing for them out of animal skins.

From this point on, God stationed mighty angels at the entrance to the garden.

God also put a flaming sword that flashed back and forth, to guard the way to the Tree of Life.

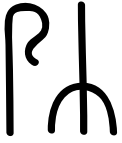
Humans would no longer be able to eat from the Tree of Life and live forever.



STORY FROM...  
Genesis 1–3

# Rebellion

- ▲ **RETELL THE STORY** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*
- ▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*
  - **What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?**
  - **What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?**
  
  - **What do we know about this serpent? What did he try to do? How?**  
*He distorted what God had said about eating fruit from the other trees.  
He lied by telling Eve that the fruit would make her like God. (Where have we seen this before?)*
  
  - **Why was it a bad idea for them to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil?**  
*There were consequences of breaking God's trust.  
They now have the responsibility of knowing about and dealing with evil in their own strength.*
  
  - **What did Adam and Eve do wrong? What were the consequences? (immediate and future)**
  - **How was their relationship affected by their disobedience?**
  
  - **Why do you think God requires consequences for sin and rebellion?**
  - **What do you think would happen if he didn't?**  
*In his perfect goodness and fairness, God will never allow evil to remain in his presence. His holiness requires that sin be punished.*
  
  - **What do we learn about humans in this story? (Where in the story did you see this?)**  
*Humans can be deceived into believing wrong things.  
Humans can choose God's ways or their own.  
Humans tend to hide and blame when faced with sin.*
  
  - **Do you think that God gave up on Adam and Eve? (Where in the story did you see this?)**
  
  - **Did you hear anything that reminded you of previous stories? What connections did you see?**
  
  - **What do we learn about God in this story? (Where in the story did you see this?)**  
*God knows all things. He knew Adam and Eve had eaten from the tree.  
God will never allow evil to remain in his presence.  
God judged each of the characters in the story. He cast Adam and Eve out of the garden and away from His presence. He promised One who would come to kill the snake.  
God keeps His promises. Although they did not die immediately, Adam and Eve's nature was changed.  
God is the source of all grace. He didn't destroy Adam and Eve.  
God made clothing for them out of animal skins.*
- ◆ **APPLICATION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*
  - Are we like Adam and Eve or different from them? How?
  - When have you had to face the consequences for doing something wrong or a bad decision?
  - How do you choose between right and wrong?
  - Where does evil come from?



◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** *(Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)*

▼ **NARRATE** *(Don't just read it-know it and bring it to life!)*

After leaving the garden, Adam and Eve started a family.

When their first son was born, named Cain, Eve shouted, "God has helped us to create another human!" Not long after that, Adam and Eve had a second son, and they named him Abel.

When their sons grew up, Cain became a farmer, and Abel became a shepherd.

At harvest time, people would bring gifts or portions of their work – called offerings – and give them to God.

So Cain brought some of his farm produce, and Abel brought the very best lambs from his flock to be offered to God. When God saw their gifts, he accepted Abel's offering but rejected Cain's.

This made Cain very angry and upset.

"Why are you so angry?" God asked Cain. "Why do you look so discouraged? You'll be accepted if you do what's right. But if you refuse to do what's right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at your door, waiting to attack and destroy you, and you must bring it under control."

Soon after that, Cain suggested to his brother, Abel, "Why don't we go out into the field..."

While they were walking in the field, Cain attacked and killed his brother. This was the first murder described in the Bible.

Later on, God asked Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"

"I don't know!" Cain replied. "Am I supposed to keep track of him wherever he goes?"

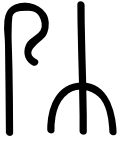
But God said, "What have you done? Listen... your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground! I am removing you from this land that you've corrupted with your brother's blood. From now on you will be homeless – a fugitive who wanders from place to place."

Cain replied to God, "This punishment is more than I can handle! You have removed me from my home... and from your presence; you have made me a fugitive. All who see me will try to kill me!"

God replied, "No! Anyone who tries to harm you will receive seven times your punishment."

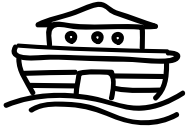
Then God put a mark on Cain to warn anyone who might try to attack him.

Cain left God's presence and traveled to the land east of the garden, where he would start a family of his own.



- ▲ **RETELL THE STORY** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*
- ▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*
  - **What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?**
  - **What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?**
  - **What did God say to Cain after he rejected his offering?  
What do you think that meant?**  
*You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, sin is waiting...*
  - **Why do you think Cain killed his brother? Where did Cain learn to do evil?**
  - **If Cain inherited his sin from his parents, do you think Abel is also a sinner?**
  - **What was God's reaction to the murder?  
Why didn't God just ignore what Cain had done? What punishment did Cain deserve?**  
*God did not repay evil with evil—he showed fairness and grace.*
  - **What do we learn about humans in this story? (Where in the story did you see this?)**  
*We try to hide from our sins.  
We want what other people have.  
We have the choice to do what is right.  
We have the tendency to not listen to God.*
  - **Did you hear anything that reminded you of previous stories? What connections did you make?**
  - **What do we learn about God in this story? (Where in the story did you see this?)**  
*God is interested in people's lives—he wants to interact with them.  
God punishes sin. God is merciful.  
God knows all things.  
God provides a way for us to live with him.  
God alone is good. God's ways are not our ways.*
- ◆ **APPLICATION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*
  - What good or bad habits have you gotten from your parents?
  - How do you think that sin can attack and destroy us?
  - What kind of gifts or offerings do you think that God is pleased with?





STORY FROM...  
Genesis 4–9

# The Flood

◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** *(Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)*

▼ **NARRATE** *(Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)*

The number of humans on the earth grew rapidly. Not only did rebellion spread from Adam and Eve to their sons, it spread from generation to generation.

Even though humans were created in God's image, each person chose to disobey God's ways. Humans were completely out of control, acting out in selfishness and violence all the time.

When God saw that the people's hearts and minds were filled with evil day and night, his heart was broken. So God decided to start over, saying, *"I will completely wipe out the human race that I've created. I am sorry that I ever made them."*

But there was one man, named Noah, who still had a close relationship with God. Noah was the only blameless man living on earth at that time. So God said to Noah, *"I have decided to cover the earth with a flood, destroying everything alive! But, I will give you a plan to keep you safe."*

God told Noah to build a large boat called an ark, giving him specific instructions about how big to make it and what it should look like. God said to him, *"Make a boat from wood and seal it with tar, inside and out. Then build many decks and stalls for animals inside of it. I promise to keep you safe in this ark! A pair of every kind of animal—a male and female—will come to you to be kept alive. You will also bring seven pairs of animals that I approved for you to eat and sacrifice. And remember, take enough food for your family and for all the animals."*

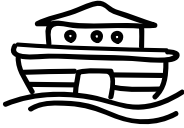
So Noah did everything exactly as he was told. Just as God had said, the floods came – water burst from the earth and rain poured from the sky. When the waters came, Noah and his family and all of the animals boarded the ark. As the waters rose, the boat floated safely on the surface. The flood covered even the tallest mountains, and all living creatures on the earth were destroyed, except for those on the ark.

After 40 days, the rains stopped. Many months passed as the waters slowly began to dry up. For weeks, Noah sent out a dove to see if it could find dry land. Finally, the dove returned with an olive leaf in its mouth. Noah sent the dove out again, and when it didn't come back, he knew it was safe to return to land. As soon as Noah came off of the ark, he built an altar, selected pure animals from every approved species, and sacrificed them to God as a symbol of thankfulness and worship.

God was pleased with Noah's sacrifice and said, *"Even though people's thoughts and actions are bent toward evil from the time they're children, I promise to never again destroy all living things with a flood. As a symbol of my promise, I will hang a rainbow in the clouds. Whenever you see a rainbow, this will remind you of my promise to you."*

Then God told Noah and his sons, *"I have put all animals under your control. You can use them for food, but you must never eat animals that still have their lifeblood in them. Life is in the blood, and all life belongs to me! Those who murder must be punished by death."*

God blessed Noah and his sons, telling them to have many children and once again fill the earth with people.



STORY FROM...  
Genesis 4–9

# The Flood

- ▲ **RETELL THE STORY** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*
- ▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*
  - **What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?**
  - **What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?**
  
  - **Why did God flood the earth and destroy everything?**  
**Do you think he had good reasons for doing this?**
  
  - **What do the stories we have heard so far show us about what humans are like?**  
*Since the fall of Adam and Eve every person has rebelled against God.*
  
  - **From this story, how does God feel about humans?**  
*Disappointment and anger at our corruption.*  
*Compassion: by saving the human race and making a promise to not destroy us again.*
  
  - **Why do you think God had Noah take animals on the ark?**
  
  - **What was God communicating to Noah (and all humans) by creating a rainbow?**  
*God is committed to give us the best possible life—he always provides a way for us.*
  
  - **What did God say to Noah about the blood from the sacrifices? Why was this important?**  
*All life belongs to God and life is in the blood. It is God himself who gives life.*  
*When Noah came out of the ark, he offered sacrifices to God presumably as a way of thanking God for showing him grace.*
  
  - **Did you hear anything that reminded you of previous stories? What connections did you make?**
  
  - **What does the story teach us about God?**  
*God is powerful—in control of the elements.*  
*God will never allow evil to remain in his presence.*  
*The flood is absolute confirmation that God always judges sin in all men.*  
*God is the source of all grace. He saved Noah and his family.*  
*Before saving them, he warned them of the coming judgment, an act of grace, just like with Cain.*  
*He promised never to destroy the earth again, even though he knew man would continue to sin.*  
*God knows all things. He knew what was in the heart of every man.*
- ◆ **APPLICATION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*
  - When have you been the only one to listen to God in a situation? What happened?
  - What is the most difficult area of your life to trust God with?
  - Where have you noticed the effects of rebellion from God in our world?  
...in your city? ...in your school? ...in your life?



STORY FROM...  
Genesis 11–18, 21

# The Covenant

◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** *(Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)*

▼ **NARRATE** *(Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)*

Noah's descendants forgot about God and how he had spared them in the flood. They made plans to construct a great city out of brick.

They said, *"Let's build a monument to ourselves that reaches to the heavens to show how great we are."*

God saw how the people were gathering together to honor themselves instead of him. At that time, everyone on earth spoke the same language. So, God gave people different languages to make it harder for them to join together in rebellion. Then, He scattered them all over the earth.  
(pause)

A few generations later, God made a special promise to a man named Abram. This promise was called a *covenant*—representing the deepest of all agreements between two people.

God made this covenant with Abram...

*"I will make you the father of a great nation—famous throughout history.  
I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.  
I will bless the entire earth through your descendants."*

(You may want to repeat the covenant)

This was an amazing promise that God was making. He was choosing to bless the entire earth through one family! There was just one problem... Abram's wife, Sarai, was unable to have children. So how would the earth be blessed through their descendants? And besides, they were getting old. Abram was about 75 and Sarai was about 65!

God told Abram, *"Leave your country and your relatives and go to the land that I will show to you."*

God led Abram and his family to a land called Canaan. There, God told Abram, *"Look as far as you can see in every direction. I am giving this land to you and your descendants."*  
This land of Canaan would now be called the "Promised Land."

Some time passed, and Abram and Sarai still did not have a child.

Abram asked God, *"What good are all of your blessings if I don't even have a son? I am getting old, and soon I will have to give my inheritance to one of my servants."*

God replied to Abram, *"No, you will have a son who will inherit everything that I have promised you."*

Then God took Abram out beneath the night sky and said, *"Look up into the heavens and count the stars. Your family will be like this—too many to count!"*

And Abram believed what God said, so God called him "righteous" because of his faith.

(story continued on next page)



STORY FROM...  
Genesis 11–18, 21

# The Covenant

(story continued from previous page)

More years passed and Sarai became impatient with not having a child. She asked her servant, an Egyptian woman named Hagar, to be a substitute mother for her.

Abram agreed with this plan. Hagar became pregnant and gave birth to a boy named Ishmael. But Hagar and Sarai's relationship became strained. During Hagar's pregnancy, she began to despise Sarai. In return, Sarai treated her servant Hagar terribly. Eventually, Hagar and Ismael were sent away and not allowed to live with Abram's family.

When Abram was 99, God appeared to him again saying, *"I am the mighty God; serve me with your entire life and live purely. I will keep my covenant with you for many generations to come. I am changing your name to Abraham, which means 'father of many nations.' Remember this... I will always be your God, and you will always be my people."*

Then God added, *"I am also changing your wife's name to Sarah, which means 'mother of many nations.' Very soon, she will be blessed with a son. You are to name this son Isaac."*

Both Abraham and Sarah laughed to themselves in disbelief of God's promise.

Abraham wondered, *"How can I become a father at 100 years old? How can Sarah have a baby when she is almost 90?"*

Sarah thought, *"How could a worn out woman like me have a baby? And my husband is even older than I am!"*

Abraham asked God, *"Would you pass on your blessing through my son Ishmael?"*

But God said, *"Why did you laugh? Is anything too hard for me? About a year from now, you will have a son. It is through Isaac that I will pass on my blessing—not through your servant's child."*

Sure enough, a year later—exactly as God had said—Sarah gave birth to their first son, naming him Isaac, which means "laughter."

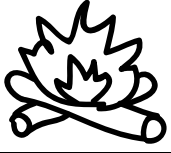
The birth of Isaac was the beginning of God fulfilling the promise he made to Abraham. God desired for Abraham's descendants, called the Hebrews, to be a new kind of people who would show the world what it means to live in God's ways.



STORY FROM...  
Genesis 11–18, 21

# The Covenant

- ▲ **RETELL THE STORY** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*
- ▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*
  - **What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?**
  - **What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?**
  - **Why did God stop the people from building a monument to themselves?**
  - **What do we learn about Abraham from the story? About Sarah?**
    - God selected him to carry out his blessing.*
    - He was old!*
    - He trusted God and left his home.*
    - Even though he trusted, he struggled to believe what God had said.*
  - **Where in the story did we see Abraham struggle to believe the promise?**
    - Abraham thought he would have to give up his inheritance to one of his servants.*
    - Abraham and Sarah laughed at God's promise and thought "How could this happen...?"*
  - **Why did God call Abram righteous? What do you think it means to be "righteous"?**
  - **What was God's relationship with Abraham?**
  - **What do we call this special promise that God made with Abraham? How is it special? Where have we seen God make a promise or covenant before? With Cain and with Noah.**
  - **What did God promise to Abraham?**
    - To make him the father of a great nation, giving him many descendants.*
    - To bless and protect him.*
    - To bless all the nations of the earth through him.*
  - **If you had to wait 25 years for a promise of God to come true, would you still believe God?**
  - **Did you hear anything that reminded you of previous stories? What connections did you make?**
  - **What does this promise tell us about what God is like?**
    - God desires to bless all people.*
    - God has chosen a family (nation) to be his blessing and to live in his ways.*
    - God will protect and bless his people.*
- ◆ **CONNECTION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*
  - **How do people in our world build "monuments" to themselves?**
  - **What do you think it means to be God's blessing?**
  - **How do you think God desires us to be his blessing? How might change the way we live?**



◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** *(Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)*

▼ **NARRATE** *(Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)*

You won't believe what happened next.

God gave Abraham a test. He called out to him, "Abraham!"  
"Yes, I am listening!" he replied.

God said, "I want you to take your son Isaac, who you love, up to the top of the mountain and offer him as a sacrifice."

The next morning Abraham got up early, saddled up his donkey, and chopped some wood for the offering. After everything was ready, Abraham and his son Isaac took two of their servants and set out for the mountain.

About three days into their journey, they saw the mountain in the distance. Abraham told his servants, "Stay here—Isaac and I are going up the mountain to worship, then we will come right back."

Abraham took the knife and the fire from the servants and he placed the wood for the sacrifice on Isaac's shoulders.

As they were walking up the mountain, Isaac became curious and asked, "Father, we have the wood and the fire, but where is the lamb we are going to sacrifice?"  
Abraham told him, "God himself will provide a lamb."

When they arrived at the top of the mountain, they built an altar and placed the wood on it. Then Abraham tied Isaac up and laid him on the altar over the wood. He took the knife and lifted it up to kill his son as a sacrifice to God.

At that moment the Angel of God shouted to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"  
"Yes, I'm listening!" he replied.

The Angel said, "Put down the knife. Do not hurt your son. It's clear that you trust me because you didn't hesitate to give me what you love the most."

Then Abraham looked behind him and saw a ram with his horns caught in a bush. He caught the ram, and offered it to God as a substitute for his son. So Abraham named that place at the top of the mountain "God Will Provide".

Soon after that, God said to Abraham, "Because you didn't refuse to give me your son, who you love, I will bless you greatly! Your family will multiply into millions—like the stars in the sky and the sand on the beaches! Your descendants will defeat their enemies on every side. The entire earth will be blessed through your family—because you chose to obey me."

Then Abraham and Isaac went down the mountain, met up with their servants, and returned home.



▲ **RETELL THE STORY** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*

▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- **What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?**
- **What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?**

- **What does this story show us about Abraham?**  
**What was Abraham's relationship with his son Isaac like?**  
**What was the relationship between God and Abraham like?**

*Abraham had a special relationship with God—chosen as the blessing.*

*Abraham had faith that God would keep his promise.*

*Abraham loved his son.*

*Abraham listened to God (and his angel).*

*What did Abraham say to his servants?*

- **What does this story show us about Isaac?**

*Isaac trusted his father.*

- **What was Abraham risking in order to obey God in this story?**

*The promise of God blessing the entire earth through his descendants.*

- **Where have we seen sacrifice before in the stories? Why did people do this?**

**What is God teaching through these sacrifices?**

*God providing clothing from animal skins for Adam and Eve.*

*Cain and Abel, Noah's sacrifice to express thanks to God and acknowledge him as the provider.*

*Noah: after the flood God made it clear that life is in the blood.*

*Isaac: God provided an animal as a substitute—life for life.*

- **What does this story teach us about God?**

*He provides for his people.*

*He tests people's faith.*

*He desires to bless us.*

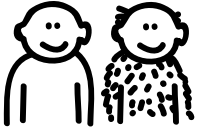
*He is the source of all grace.*

*He keeps his promises.*

- **Would you obey God if he asked you to do this?**

◆ **CONNECTION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*

- **What is the greatest sacrifice that you or someone in your family has ever made?**
- **After thinking about this story, what does you think that God desires from us?**



STORY FROM...  
Genesis 25–33

## Jacob & Esau

- ◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** *(Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)*
- ▼ **NARRATE** *(Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)*

When Isaac was 40 years old, he married Rebekah. Isaac prayed hard for his wife because she could not have a child. God answered his prayer, and Rebekah became pregnant with twins. But the two children fought with each other inside her womb.

She prayed and asked God, *"Why is this happening to me?"*  
God told her, *"Your sons will become two rival nations. One nation will be stronger than the other and the older son will serve the younger son."*

When the first son was born he was very red and hairy; he looked like he was already wearing clothing! So they called him Esau, which sounds like the word for "hair".

Then the other twin was born with his hand grabbing Esau's heel.  
So they named him Jacob, which means "grabbing the heel", but can also mean "deceiver".

As the boys grew up, Esau became an expert hunter who loved the outdoors.  
His brother Jacob liked to stay indoors and live quietly in the tents.  
Isaac loved Esau and all of the wild game he would bring home, but Rebekah favored Jacob.

Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came home exhausted from hunting and said to Jacob, *"I'm starving! Give me some of that red stew you've made."*  
Jacob replied, *"All right, but trade me your inheritance for it."*  
*"Hey—I'm dying of starvation!"* said Esau. *"What good is my inheritance to me if I starve?"*

Jacob demanded, *"Swear to me right now that you will give me your inheritance."*  
So Esau gave an oath trading away his inheritance and his rights as the firstborn son.

Then Jacob gave Esau some bread and stew. Esau quickly ate and drank and went on his way—not thinking about the fact that he had just given up his inheritance.

Years later, when Isaac was old and almost blind, he called for Esau and said,  
*"I am an old man now and I will die soon. Hunt some wild game for me and prepare it just the way I like it. Then, before I die I will pass on the blessing that belongs to you, my firstborn son."*

Rebekah overheard this conversation. So when Esau left to go hunting, she said to Jacob,  
*"Do exactly as I tell you. Go and bring back two of the finest goats from our flocks and I'll prepare your father's favorite dish from them. Take the food to your father; then he will eat it and give you the blessing instead of Esau."*

Jacob replied, *"Mother—he won't be fooled that easily. Esau is hairy and my skin is smooth! What if he touches me? He'll see that I'm trying to trick him, and then he'll curse me instead of blessing me."*  
*"Just do as I say!"* Rebekah demanded.

(story continued on next page)





STORY FROM...  
Genesis 25–33

## Jacob & Esau

(story continued from previous page)

So Jacob brought back two of their best goats, and Rebekah made Isaac's favorite meal. Then she put Esau's best clothes on Jacob and made him a pair of long hairy gloves from the skin of the goats.

Then Jacob took the meal to his father pretending he was Esau.

*"The voice is Jacob's, but the hands are Esau's,"* Isaac said to himself.

*"Are you really my son, Esau?"* Isaac asked.

*"Yes of course!"* Jacob answered.

*"If you are, come here and kiss your father,"* Isaac said.

So Jacob went and kissed Isaac. When he did this Isaac smelled his clothes and was finally convinced he was really Esau.

So Isaac gave his blessing to Jacob saying, *"May God pass on to you the blessing he promised to Abraham. Your family will grow large and become a great nation and other nations will become your servants. God will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you."*

As soon as Isaac had blessed Jacob, Esau returned from his hunting trip. When he learned that Isaac had given his blessing to his brother he wept out loud, *"Father, bless me, too!"*

But Isaac said, *"Your brother was here and tricked me. He has carried away your blessing."*

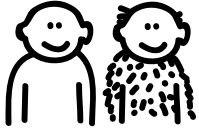
Esau hated Jacob and said to himself, *"After my father is dead, I will kill Jacob."*

Rebekah found out that Jacob was in danger and sent him far away to live with his uncle.

On his journey God appeared to Jacob saying, *"I am the God of your grandfather and father. I am giving you and your descendants this land. Your family will grow large and be a blessing to the entire earth! I will be with you and protect you wherever you go—giving you everything I have promised."*

And God blessed Jacob with great wealth and 12 sons! Jacob's name was changed to Israel, which means "struggler with God". The Hebrews would later be called the people of Israel, named after Jacob.

Many years later Esau forgave his brother Jacob. Then Jacob and his growing family moved back to the Promised Land of Canaan.



STORY FROM...  
Genesis 25–33

# Jacob & Esau

▲ **RETELL THE STORY** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*

▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?
- What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?
- From this story, what do we learn about Jacob? Esau? Rebekah?
- What did God tell Rebekah about the children in her womb?
- How might that have affected her actions?
- Why do you think Esau gave up his inheritance so easily?
- Why do you think Jacob desired his father's blessing?
- Why would God pass on his blessing to Jacob when he deceived his father to get it?
- What blessing is God passing on through Abraham, Isaac and now Jacob?

• **What does the story teach us about God?**

*God is powerful. He was able again to cause Rebekah, a barren woman, to conceive (Just like he had done with Sarah).*

*God knows all things. He knew the future of the boys while they were still in the womb.*

*He knew that the older would serve the younger.*

*God is the source of all grace. God blesses us even when we don't deserve it.*

*Jacob was a continual deceiver, yet God established his covenant with him.*

*God keeps his promises. He passed the covenant he made with Abraham on to his son Isaac, and on to Jacob. Each time he promised to bless all the nations of the earth through them.*

*God is patient with our selfishness.*

- Did you hear anything that reminded you of previous stories? What connections did you make?

• **In what ways are we also like Jacob?**

*We are all sinners just like Jacob. None of us do anything to deserve any of God's blessings.*

◆ **CONNECTION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*

- Where in your life has God blessed you?
- Why do you think that God uses people to bless others?
- Why do you think that God allows things to happen that do not make sense to us?



STORY FROM...  
Genesis 37–39, 41–50

# Joseph

◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** *(Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)*

▼ **NARRATE** *(Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)*

Israel (Jacob) and his 12 sons now lived in the Promised Land. Out of all of his sons, Israel loved Joseph the most and made him a beautiful coat with long sleeves. When Joseph was 17, he helped his brothers tend the cattle—and reported to his father anything they did wrong.

Joseph's brothers grew to hate him because he was their father's favorite. They hated him even more when he told them that he had dreams about the future where he saw all of them bowing down to him!

One day Joseph went to check on his brothers and they grabbed him, ripped off his beautiful coat, and threw him into a deep hole. Then the brothers decided to sell Joseph to slave traders who were passing by on their way to Egypt.

They tore up their brother's coat, soaked it in goat's blood, and brought it to their father saying, *"We found this in the field—it's Joseph's isn't it?"*

Israel examined it and said, *"Yes, this is my son's coat. A wild animal must have attacked and eaten him."* He began to weep saying, *"I will mourn my son's death until the day I die!"*

Meanwhile, the slave traders sold Joseph to a man named Potiphar, the head guard for Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. Potiphar noticed that God was with Joseph and blessed everything that he did. So he promoted him, putting him in charge of his entire household and business.

Now Joseph was a young, handsome man, and Potiphar's wife began to desire him. She constantly pressured him to sleep with her. But Joseph refused, saying, *"That would be a terrible thing and a great sin against God!"*

One night after Potiphar got home, his wife told him, *"The Hebrew slave you brought here tried to rape me."*

Potiphar became furious and threw Joseph into the king's prison. But God gave him favor with the head of the jail. God was with Joseph, continuing to give him success in everything he did. Before long, Joseph was put in charge of the other prisoners and everything that happened there! God also gave Joseph the ability to interpret the other prisoners' dreams.

A few years later Pharaoh had some dreams that troubled him. In one of them he saw seven fat cows being eaten by seven thin cows! None of Pharaoh's wisest men could interpret what this meant.

One of the servants who had been in prison with Joseph told Pharaoh about his ability to interpret dreams. So Pharaoh had Joseph brought to him and asked, *"Can you really interpret dreams?"*

Joseph replied, *"That is beyond me, but God will tell you what your dreams mean and ease your worry."*

Pharaoh shared his dreams and Joseph interpreted them saying, *"For the next seven years Egypt will have an abundance of food. This will be followed by seven years of a terrible famine that will spread over the land."*

(story continued on next page)



STORY FROM...  
Genesis 37–39, 41–50

# Joseph

(story continued from previous page)

The king was so impressed with Joseph that he put him in charge of everything in Egypt—second in power only to Pharaoh himself!

During the next seven years Joseph traveled throughout Egypt making sure that plenty of food was being stored up in each city. Joseph was only 30 years old at the time.

Seven years passed and the famine came, spreading throughout the world. People from all over the land came to Egypt to buy food from Joseph.

When Israel realized his family was running out of food, he sent his sons to Egypt. When the brothers arrived to buy food, they didn't recognize Joseph and bowed down before him. Joseph did not tell them who he was until later.

At first, Joseph was harsh with his brothers, even accusing them of being spies and putting them in prison. But later, after many meetings and two journeys by his brothers, Joseph finally revealed who he was saying, *"I am Joseph, your brother whom you sold as a slave!"*

The brothers stood there speechless—shocked and afraid! They would never have thought that Joseph could still be alive.

But Joseph spoke to them kindly and said, *"Don't be afraid. God turned your evil into something good. He put me in this high position so I could save the lives of many people. Now I will take care of you and your families."*

When Pharaoh heard that Joseph's brothers had come, he invited Israel and his entire family to live in Egypt. He gave them a plot of his best land, plenty of food, and all new clothing!

So the family of Israel came to live in Egypt, escaping the drought and enjoying the blessings that God had given to Joseph.



STORY FROM...  
Genesis 37–39, 41–50

# Joseph

▲ **RETELL THE STORY** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*

▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?
- What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?

- What do we learn about Joseph's brothers from the story?
- Why did Joseph's brothers not like him?

- What do we learn about Joseph from the story?

*He was a dreamer.*

*He was a tattler.*

*He was blessed by God and successful in all he did.*

*He trusted God in a bad situation.*

*He made good decisions in temptation.*

*He desired to take care of his family.*

- How did Joseph respond in the difficult situations he faced?
- Do you think his response was realistic? Was it helpful?

- How does God continue his promise to the Hebrews in the story?

*He did not let the descendants of Abraham–Israel and his family die in the famine.*

- What does the story teach us about God?

*God knows all things. He can orchestrate events to accomplish his purpose.*

*He shows them what will happen in the future.*

*God is the source of all grace.*

*He promoted Joseph and blessed him in order to save many people.*

*God keeps his promises. The things revealed in the dreams came true just as God said they would.*

*God is powerful. He can control the elements by bringing a famine.*

*God chooses to work through people who are not perfect.*

- Where have we seen God take a situation that seemed bad and turn it into good?

*(From the stories? From your own life?)*

◆ **CONNECTION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*

- How does Joseph's life inspire you?
- Do you like things in life planned out or more spontaneous?
- When have you felt mistreated, but in the end God used the situation for your good?



STORY FROM...  
Exodus 1–4

# Moses

- ◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** (Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)
- ▼ **NARRATE** (Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)

The family of Israel had moved to Egypt and was enjoying the blessings that God had given to Joseph. Years passed, and Israel's family multiplied so quickly that they began to fill Egypt! Soon, a new king ruled Egypt who didn't remember how Joseph had saved them from the great famine. This king, called Pharaoh, told his people, *"The Israelites are becoming a threat to us. There are too many of them! If we don't stop them now, they could join our enemies and fight against us."*

So the Egyptians made the Israelites their slaves and treated them horribly. Pharaoh even gave an order to have every newborn son of the Israelites killed by drowning them in the Nile River.

One Hebrew family put their baby son in a basket and floated him down the Nile in hopes of saving his life. Pharaoh's daughter discovered this baby crying in the basket and felt sorry for him. Moses' sister, who followed the basket from a distance, offered to help Pharaoh's daughter find a mother to nurse the baby. Pharaoh's daughter agreed, but she didn't know that she was hiring Moses' own mother to take care of him! The princess took the baby home to raise him in the king's palace and named him Moses (*which means "to draw out"*).

Many years later, after Moses had grown up, he went out to where his own people were and watched them being forced to work as slaves. He witnessed an Egyptian beating one of the Hebrews. Moses looked around to see if anyone was watching, then killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand. When Pharaoh heard about this he tried to have Moses killed, but Moses escaped to the wilderness and started a new life as a shepherd.

Several years later a new Pharaoh came into power and continued to punish the Israelites in slavery. The people of Israel cried out to God for help and deliverance. God heard their cries and felt deep concern for them. He did not forget the covenant promise he made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

One day while Moses was tending sheep he noticed a bush that was on fire, but it wasn't burning up. He said to himself, *"That's amazing! I've got to go over and see this."*

God called out to him from the bush, *"Moses, Moses!"*

*"Yes, here I am!"* Moses answered.

*"Don't come any closer,"* God told him. *"Take off your sandals, because you are standing on holy ground."* Moses hid his face in his hands because he was afraid to look at God.

Then God told him, *"I have heard my people's cries for deliverance and have come to rescue them. I have chosen you to meet with Pharaoh and lead my people out of Egypt."* But Moses begged God to send someone else saying, *"Who am I? I'm not a good speaker... I'm clumsy with my words."*

But God said, *"Who created mouths? Who gives people the ability to speak, hear, and see? I will help you speak clearly, and I will tell you what to say. But be prepared—Pharaoh is stubborn and will not listen."* God allowed Moses to bring his brother Aaron with him to help him speak to Pharaoh.

Then Moses asked, *"Who should I tell them has sent me?"*

God replied, *"I AM WHO I AM. Tell them that I AM has sent you—the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is my name for every generation."*

Then Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said, *"This is what the God of Israel says: 'Let my people go!'"*

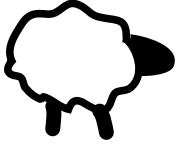
You won't believe what happened next...



STORY FROM...  
Exodus 1–4

# Moses

- ▲ **RETELL THE STORY** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*
- ▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*
  - **What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?**
  - **What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?**
    - **How did the Israelites get into Egypt? How were they treated when they first arrived? How did that change?**
  - **Why did Moses remove his sandals when he talked to God? Why do you think Moses was afraid to look at God?**
  - **What did God call himself in the story? What do you think this means?**
    - I will always be—before you and after you.*
    - God cannot be contained in a name—too amazing for words.*
  - **What do we learn about Moses from this story?**
    - Moses was a sinner and a murderer, but God still chose to use him.*
    - He felt weak but God used him anyway.*
    - What is Moses' relationship like with God? With the people of Israel?*
  - **Did you hear anything that reminded you of previous stories? What connections did you make?**
  - **What does this story teach us about God?**
    - He is powerful.*
    - He keeps his promises.*
    - He cares for people.*
    - He is able to deliver and protect all who cry out to him.*
    - He desires to use people to represent him.*
    - He allows suffering.*
    - His ways are sometimes hard for us to understand at first.*
- ◆ **CONNECTION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*
  - **Has God ever used you when you were afraid or unsure of yourself? How? What did you learn?**
  - **How might suffering benefit us?**



STORY FROM...  
Exodus 5–15

# The Passover

◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** *(Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)*

▼ **NARRATE** *(Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)*

Moses and his brother Aaron met with Pharaoh and pleaded with him, *"Let the Israelites leave Egypt for just three days to worship God. If you choose not to do this, God will punish the Egyptians severely."*

But Pharaoh was stubborn and would not listen. He said, *"Who is this God that I should listen to him? I don't know your God, and I am not letting you leave. You are just trying to create a distraction. Now, get back to work!"*

After their meeting with Pharaoh things got worse for the Israelites. Pharaoh forced them to work faster and longer hours. Cruel slave masters pushed them harder and harder as they worked in the fields and made bricks from mud and straw.

So God sent a series of horrible plagues on the Egyptians and their land. But these plagues did not have any effect on the Israelites.

The **first plague** turned the Nile River into blood. All of the fish died and the water smelled terrible and was undrinkable.

The **second plague** brought a mob of frogs that covered the entire country. These frogs were everywhere—in their bedrooms, kitchens and even in their pots and pans!

The **third and fourth plagues** brought gnats and flies. They covered all of the people and animals. Pharaoh's magicians tried to copy each of these plagues, but couldn't create gnats. They cried to Pharaoh, *"God must be doing this to us!"*

After each of these plagues Moses returned to Pharaoh and asked him to let the Israelites go so they could worship God. But Pharaoh was stubborn and would not listen.

The **fifth plague** brought severe disease to Egypt's livestock, but none of the Israelites' cattle became sick!

The **sixth plague** caused the Egyptians to break out with horrible sores all over their bodies—so bad they couldn't sit or lay down!

Pharaoh would say, *"Enough! If you stop the plagues, I will let you leave..."*  
But after God stopped the plagues, Pharaoh still would not let them go.  
God had made Pharaoh even more stubborn, and he refused to listen.

The **seventh and eighth plagues** brought hail and locusts that destroyed every tree and plant in the land. The locusts swept down and ate everything that wasn't wiped out by the hail.

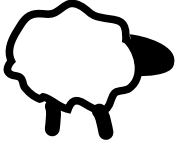
The **ninth plague** brought complete darkness over the land for three days.  
No one could see anything except for the Israelites who still had light in their homes.

Despite all of these horrific events, Pharaoh still would not let the Israelites leave! God told Moses, *"Pharaoh's stubbornness will give me the opportunity to do even greater miracles in Egypt."*

So God would send one final plague...

*(story continued on next page)*





STORY FROM...  
Exodus 5-15

# The Passover

(story continued from previous page)

Moses warned Pharaoh about this final plague saying, *"This is what God says to you: 'About midnight, I will pass through Egypt. Every firstborn son will die—rich or poor—from Pharaoh's son on down. And the Egyptians will weep loudly, but the Israelites will not be touched. Then, you will beg the people of Israel to leave.'"*

As Moses left his meeting with Pharaoh, he burned with anger. In spite of this warning, Pharaoh still refused to let them go.

Then Moses gave the Israelites instructions from God on how they could be saved from this plague. He told the people, *"Each family is to select a sacrifice—a year-old male lamb that is pure and without any defects, and be careful not to break any of its bones. Then, take the blood from this sacrifice and put it on the doorframes of your home. This will be a sign for God to pass over your home and spare your firstborn."*

So the people of Israel did exactly what God told them to do.

At midnight God came through Egypt and took the life of every firstborn son, but he passed over the homes that had blood on their doorframes. All of Egypt woke during the night because of the loud weeping. Someone had died in nearly every Egyptian home, including Pharaoh's own son. The Egyptians begged the Israelites to leave right away.

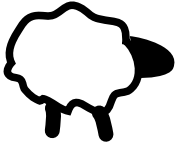
That night, the Israelites, now numbering over two million, set out to return to their Promised Land of Canaan. God guided them through the wilderness with a pillar of clouds during the day and a pillar of fire at night.

Meanwhile, Pharaoh changed his mind again and sent his armies after the Israelites to catch them. When the people of Israel arrived at the bank of a wide sea, they saw Pharaoh and his armies approaching from a distance and began to panic. They turned against Moses complaining, *"Our slavery back in Egypt was better than dying out here in the wilderness!"*

But Moses told the people, *"Don't be afraid—God will rescue you today—he will fight for you!"*

Then God told Moses to stretch out his hand over the sea. As he did this, God brought a huge wind that opened up a dry path for them to walk across! Pharaoh and his armies began to follow behind the Israelites. God told Moses to stretch out his hand again. This brought another huge wind that blew the sea back over Pharaoh and his armies, completely destroying them!

The people of Israel were in awe of God's amazing power. They put their trust in God and also in his servant Moses. They sang songs, danced, and celebrated how God had saved them!



STORY FROM...  
Exodus 5–15

# The Passover

▲ **RETELL THE STORY** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*

▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?
- What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?
  - Why is this story called "The Passover"?
  - What parts of God's promise to Abraham do we see beginning to be fulfilled?  
*How many descendants did Abraham have in just a couple of generations?*  
*How did God treat the Israelites enemies?*
  - Why do you think God would harden Pharaoh's heart?
  - What did Pharaoh's stubbornness allow God to display?
  - Where is water mentioned in this story? How is this significant?  
Where have we seen water mentioned in previous stories?
  - What did God specifically say about the animal they were to sacrifice?
  - Why did it need to be pure?
  - Why do you think God required blood to be put on the Israelites door posts in order to be saved? What does blood represent?
  - How might you have felt that Passover night as a Hebrew?  
Would you have doubted that God would save you in this situation?
  - Did you hear anything that reminded you of previous stories? What connections did you make?
  - What does this story teach us about God?  
*He keeps his promises (covenant, warnings to Pharaoh).*  
*He is able to deliver and protect all who cry out to him.*  
*He is powerful.*  
*He cares for people.*  
*He is the source of grace (he warned Pharaoh).*  
*He punishes injustice.*

◆ **CONNECTION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*

- Have you ever celebrated a Seder Dinner or Passover Celebration? What was it like?
- Why do you think that Jewish people still regard the Passover as their most important story?



STORY FROM...  
Exodus 16–34  
Deuteronomy 4–7

## Law & Commands

- ◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** (*Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story*)
- ▼ **NARRATE** (*Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!*)

It wasn't long after the Israelites left Egypt that they began complaining again to Moses. They complained about not having enough to eat and not having water to drink. They kept nagging him, asking, *"Why did you make us leave Egypt? We had plenty to eat and drink there. Did you lead us into the wilderness to die?"*

Moses cried out to God, *"What am I going to do with these people? They're about to kill me!"*

So each time the Israelites ran out of food or water, God provided for them through a miracle; he sent birds to their camp for them to eat, he covered the ground with a flaky bread-like food, and he even made water pour out of a rock for them to drink!

Two months after leaving Egypt, the Israelites set up camp at the base of Mount Sinai. Moses climbed up the mountain so he could meet with God. There, God spoke to him saying, *"Tell my people this, 'You saw how I carried you on eagles wings and rescued you from Egypt. Now, if you obey me and keep my covenant, you will be my treasured people—a kingdom of priests—set apart to represent me.'"*

When Moses came down the mountain, he told the people what God said. They all agreed, *"We will do everything that God asks us to do."*

Then God told Moses, *"Gather the Israelites at the base of the mountain so I can speak to them."* As the people gathered, God warned them, *"Do not climb the mountain or even touch the edge, or you will be put to death."*

Right then, a powerful storm rolled in, and a dark cloud covered the mountain. God spoke to them from a blazing fire on top of the mountain, giving these commands:

*"I am your God who rescued you from slavery in Egypt.  
Put me above everything else. Do not worship other things.  
Do not misuse or disrespect my name.  
Remember to set aside a day each week to rest and worship me.  
Honor your parents. Don't murder or steal or lie.  
Do not sleep with anyone but your husband or wife—be faithful.  
Don't lust after what others have—be satisfied with what I give you."*

As God spoke, the people trembled with fear and moved away from the mountain! Moses told them, *"Don't be afraid. God is showing you his awesome power. From now on, let your fear of him keep you from sinning!"*

As the people stood in the distance, Moses climbed up into the dark cloud. Up on the mountain, God gave Moses more instructions, called laws, to give to Israel. These laws gave specific details about things like...

*how to treat neighbors and enemies, how to handle conflicts, what is fair punishment, when to work and rest, when to celebrate and worship, and what offerings are acceptable to God.*

**(story continued on next page)**



STORY FROM...  
Exodus 16–34  
Deuteronomy 4–7

## Law & Commands

(story continued from previous page)

Another time, Moses went up on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights with his helper Joshua. God gave Moses two stone tablets. On these tablets were the details of the covenant written by God's finger!

While Moses was away on the mountain, the people went to his brother Aaron and said, *"We don't know what happened to Moses. Make us a god that we can see who will lead us!"*

So, Aaron created an idol in the shape of a golden calf and put it on an altar for them to worship. He told them, *"Here is the god that saved you from Egypt!"* The next day, the people had a wild party as they worshipped the gold calf.

When God saw how the Israelites were acting, he said to Moses, *"I have seen enough stubbornness and rebellion from these people. I am going to destroy all of them with fire and create a new nation from your children."*

But Moses begged God not to kill them, and God withdrew his threat and allowed them to live.

When Moses returned to camp and saw the people worshipping the calf, he was so angry that he smashed the stone tablets on the ground! Then he took the calf, ground it up into powder, mixed it with water, and made the people drink it!

The next day, Moses returned to the mountain to ask God to forgive his people. God responded, *"Whoever has sinned against me must be punished."* And God sent a plague to punish those who had worshipped the calf. About 3,000 of the Israelites died from this plague. (pause)

Soon after that, God also said to Moses, *"I am full of mercy and grace. I am slow to get angry and full of love and faithfulness. I show my love by forgiving rebellion and sin, but I will not let sin go unpunished."*

*This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel: I will show my awesome power through you and remove those who oppose you, but you must always listen to me and obey my commands."*

Moses met with God for another 40 days and 40 nights. On a new set of tablets, God wrote the details of how to live in his covenant. Moses gave these tablets to the people of Israel so they could follow them, live in his ways, and enjoy his blessings.



STORY FROM...  
Exodus 16–34  
Deuteronomy 4–7

# Law & Commands

▲ **RETELL THE STORY** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*

▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?
- What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?

- What is a covenant? What was the covenant that God was talking about?
- Who was it given to originally?

- How do you think the Israelites could keep their side of the covenant?
- Would God remove his covenant if they did not obey him?

*Partially—He may not bless them and protect them, but ultimately, he chooses to save them to show how great he is, not always basing this on how sinless they are.*

- What do you think God meant by saying, “You will be a kingdom of priests”?

- What is the purpose of the Commandments and Laws? Why were they needed?  
Why do you think God is so specific about these things?

*The commands and laws were good news—they helped the people of Israel understand how to live a life that pleased God and reflected his character. Living this way would be a blessing to the entire world!*

- Which of these commandments do you think is the hardest to keep?

- What do you think it means to “lust after what others have”?  
*(You may want to ask some specific questions about each of the commandments)*

- What do God's Commandments and Laws show us about him?

- What is the result of following in God's ways?  
Where have you seen this in the stories?

*God's people must live a certain way to reflect the character of the holy God.*

◆ **CONNECTION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*

- What rules do you have a hard time following? Why?
- When are rules good or helpful?
  
- How do you determine the right way to live?
- What happens when we are left to determine this for ourselves?
- What are some of the characteristics of living in God's ways?



STORY FROM...  
Exodus 25–40  
Leviticus 1–5, 12–23  
Numbers 3, 9–14, 27–33

# The Tabernacle

- ◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** (Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)
- ▼ **NARRATE** (Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)

God had just given the people of Israel specific instructions about how to live in his ways and remain close to him in a covenant relationship.

During one of Moses' trips up the mountain, God also gave him specific instructions about how to build a holy tent called the *Tabernacle*.

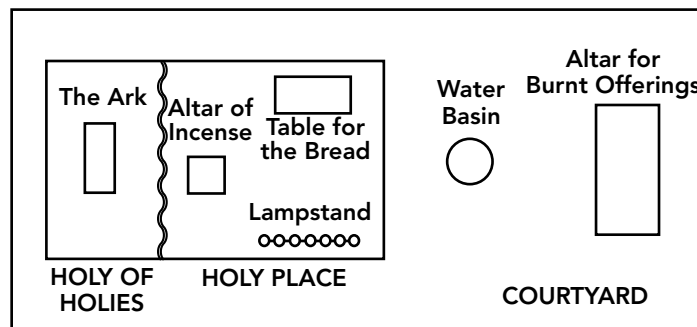
God said, "Build a special place for me to live among the people I love."

So, Moses gathered the very best craftsmen and workers, and they began building the Tabernacle in the center of their camp.

(You may want to draw a simple diagram of the Tabernacle as you tell this part. See below.)

The tent was divided into two rooms. The large outer room was called the *Holy Place*. Inside this room, there was a stand that held seven oil lamps called a *Menorah*. These lamps burned day and night and symbolized God's constant protection and watch over his people. Next to this, was a table with 12 loaves of bread on it, reminding them that God would always provide for their needs. Also in the Holy Place, there was a gold altar where incense was burned. Incense reminded them of God's nearness and was also a symbol of their prayers rising to God.

The small inner room was called the *Holy of Holies*. A thick curtain hung from the ceiling of the tent all the way down to the floor, separating it from the Holy Place. This room contained a special wooden chest called the *Ark of the Covenant*. The Ark contained the stone tablets that God wrote on and gave to Moses. On top of the Ark, there was a gold cover called the *Mercy Seat* where the presence of God would come.



When the Israelites finished building the Tabernacle, God showed his presence was there by covering the top of it with a cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night. Whenever the cloud or fire would move, they would pack up camp and follow it.

God told the people of Israel, "When you realize you have sinned, you must confess it and bring an offering to me. Then, I will remove your sins and forgive you."

Because of his love for the Israelites, God provided a way for them to substitute the life of an animal that was pure and without defects, in place of their own—a life for a life. So everyday, people would bring sacrifices to God in the courtyard of the Tabernacle. This system of sacrifice continued for hundreds of years, but these sacrifices were only a symbol of what was to come.

God was preparing a final sacrifice that would pay for the world's sins ... once and for all.



STORY FROM...  
Exodus 25–40  
Leviticus 1–5, 12–23  
Numbers 3, 9–14, 27–33

# The Tabernacle

(story continued from previous page)

At this time, the Israelites organized themselves into 12 groups—called tribes—according to which of the 12 sons of Israel (Jacob) they descended from.

Moses' brother Aaron was the oldest of the descendants of Levi, Israel's firstborn son. God chose Aaron and his sons to represent the people as priests. They had the special job of bringing the people's offerings to God.

The priests were the only ones allowed inside the Tabernacle. If anyone else tried to come near God's presence, they would die. But no one was allowed to go inside the Holy of Holies except the high priest, Aaron, on a special day called the *Day of Atonement*.

God said to Moses, *"In addition to the weekly Sabbath, you should set aside time for festivals where everyone comes together to worship, celebrate and rest."* So, the Israelites held several festivals each year—some lasted for weeks! This special *Day of Atonement* occurred during one of their fall festivals.

God said, *"This will be a special day where you will all be made right with me. Today you will find forgiveness and cleansing from all your sins."*

Then God told the Aaron, the high priest, what he must do on the Day of Atonement. He said, *You must follow all of my instructions completely or you will die. Make sure you are completely clean, without sin on the inside and out. Then, wear the special clothes made for this occasion."* (God went on to describe the special under clothing and elaborate robe that Aaron should wear).

God continued, *"Sacrifice a young bull as payment for your sins and the sins of your family. Then, dip your finger in the blood from this bull and sprinkle it on the cover of the Ark, and then sprinkle it seven times on the front of the Ark."*

*Then find two spotless goats and sacrifice one of them as a substitute for the sins of all of the Israelites. Take its blood and sprinkle it on the cover and front of the ark as you did with the bull's blood. I will accept this and forgive all the sins and rebellion of the people. Remember, blood represents life; in this blood, you will find life and atonement for your sins."*

After this, Aaron was to bring in the other goat that was still alive, called the scapegoat (also called the *Ahazazel*, which means to "take away").

And God told him, *"Lay both of your hands on its head and confess all of the people's sins, putting them on the head of the goat. Then, lead this goat far away into the wilderness. The people's sins will be taken away with it—never to be seen again."*

Aaron and the people of Israel followed God's instructions carefully. Because of this, the people were made right with God once again and given atonement for their sins.

This was a holy day that the people of Israel continued to celebrate year after year.



STORY FROM...  
Exodus 25–40  
Leviticus 1–5, 12–23  
Numbers 3, 9–14, 27–33

# The Tabernacle

- ▲ **RETELL THE STORY** (*This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story*)
- ▼ **DIALOGUE** (*These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story*)
  - **What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?**
  - **What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?**
  
  - **What was the purpose of the Tabernacle?**
  - **Why do you think that no one was allowed to go in to the Holy of Holies?**
  
  - **What was the purpose of the sacrifices that people brought to God?**  
*Sacrifice is necessary for sinful / rebellious people to come into a Holy God's presence.*  
*NOTE: Animal sacrifice was a relatable practice at that time... they lived in a culture where this was common... it meant giving up their most valued possession as a sign of their dependence on God.*
  
  - **What do you think the word "atonement" means?**
  
  - **What stands out to you as being most significant about the Day of Atonement?**  
*The detail and order that things happened. This was necessary so that the high priest did not die in the presence of God.*  
*The importance of blood to pay for sin—life for life. We have now seen this on several occasions. Life must be substituted for another life in order to pay for sin.*  
*God is holy and separate, and no one can casually come into his presence. There is even a tradition that when the high priest went into the Holy of Holies, he tied a rope around his ankle in case he died before God. This provided a way for him to be pulled out of the Holy of Holies without someone else going in after him and dying.*
  
  - **Why were there two goats used on the Day of Atonement? Why was this important?**  
*The first goat was a payment for sins; the second goat allowed for the removal of those sins.*
  
  - **Did you hear anything that reminded you of previous stories? What connections did you make?**
  
  - **What does this story teach us about God?**  
*God is Holy and will not allow sin to remain in his presence. Not just anyone could enter the Holy of Holies—only the high priest once a year, and only if he had first paid for his sin!*  
*God is the source of grace. He makes a way for man to come to him and to pay for his sin.*  
*God desires for us to listen to him and live in his ways—not our own.*  
*God is to be approached with great respect and awe.*  
*God loves his people and desires to be near them.*
- ◆ **CONNECTON** (*Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups*)
  - Have you ever thought that if you were good enough, God would let you into his presence or into heaven? Does this story challenge or reinforce that idea?
  - How do you think we should approach (come to) God? How do you approach God?





STORY FROM...

Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 2 Samuel, 2 Kings

PROPHECIES FROM...

2 Sam. 7, Isaiah 7, 9, 40, 53, 61, Psalm 22, Micah 5, Zachariah 12

# Judges, Kings & Prophets

- ◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** (Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)
- ▼ **NARRATE** (Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)

The people of Israel continued on their journey back to the Promised Land. God covered the Tabernacle with a cloud during the day that changed to a pillar of fire at night. When this cloud moved they followed it and set up camp wherever it stopped.

But when the people of Israel got close to Canaan—within a few miles from the border—they wouldn't enter the land because they were afraid of the people who lived there. They said, *"We can't defeat them, they are stronger and bigger than us. Next to them we are like little grasshoppers!"*

God had promised to fight for them and give them this land, but the people did not trust him. So God punished them by making them wander in the desert for 40 years. This was a time filled with struggle and complaints against Moses and God.

As Moses neared the end of his life, he reminded the people of Israel of all of God's promises, laws, and commandments. Moses challenged them, *"You must love God with all of your heart, mind, soul and strength ... for he is your life!"*

Then Moses said to Joshua in front of all of the Israelites, *"Be strong and courageous! Now Joshua will lead these people into the land God promised us. Do not be afraid or discouraged; God will never leave you or forget about you."* (If you remember from a previous story, Joshua was Moses' assistant that went up the mountain with him to meet with God.)

After Moses died, Joshua became the new leader of Israel and led them to recapture the Promised Land from their enemies. As the Israelites entered the land, God told them to drive out all of the people who lived there because they were full of evil. But the Israelites didn't listen and eventually started worshipping the false gods of the people who remained in Canaan. This led into many other sins. Because of their disobedience, God removed his protection and allowed other nations to come into Canaan and overpower them.

As they were defeated, the people of Israel began to suffer, so they begged God for help and forgiveness. God once again forgave them and sent leaders, called *judges*, to lead them in defeating their enemies. (These are not like judges we have today, but more like generals). Battle after battle, Israel conquered their enemies at every border. In victory, the people would worship God, but soon after, the people turned away from God again and lived their own way.

Unfortunately, this became a pattern from generation to generation... the people of Israel would come to God and worship him when they needed help, but when things were going well, they returned to worshipping other things. This was a time where everyone did what was right in their own eyes.

Because other nations were ruled by kings, the people of Israel complained to God saying, *"We want a human king, who we can see, to rule over us."* God appointed a king named Saul to rule Israel. However, because of his disobedience, God eventually removed Saul as king. God searched for a king who would love him and live in his ways.

*(story continued on next page)*



STORY FROM...

Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 2 Samuel, 2 Kings

PROPHECIES FROM...

2 Sam. 7, Isaiah 7, 9, 40, 53, 61, Psalm 22, Micah 5, Zachariah 12

# Judges, Kings & Prophets

(story continued from previous page)

He chose a young boy named David. When David grew up and was made king, God blessed him and the Israelites greatly. David deeply loved God and tried to live in his ways. God told David, "One of your descendants will rule Israel forever—his kingdom will never end!"

Solomon succeeded his father David and became the wisest and richest king in history. Solomon prayed to God, "Give me your wisdom so I can rule the people the right way." God answered his prayer and gave Solomon great wisdom; in fact, rulers traveled from all over the world just to hear him. Solomon wrote books like Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, which are full of the wisdom that God gave him.

Under Solomon's leadership, the people of Israel enjoyed peace and great prosperity. The Temple was built in the capital city of Jerusalem to replace the Tabernacle. This Temple was a more permanent symbol of God's presence remaining with the people.

But later on, Solomon married foreign wives who led him into worshipping false gods. Because of Solomon's failures, God allowed civil war to break out, and the Israelites divided into a northern kingdom called Israel and southern kingdom called Judah. Eventually, kings that worshipped false gods led both of these kingdoms.

Because of their rebellion, God removed his protection from both Israel and Judah and allowed other nations to come in and conquer them. The Israelites were forced out of the Promised Land and many were taken away to be slaves once again.

During the time of these kings, God sent *prophets* as messengers, calling people to return to his ways and follow his commandments. These prophets warned the Israelites of what would happen if they continued to rebel against God.

A prophet named Jeremiah proclaimed God's message, saying, "A day is coming when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel. I will put my laws in their minds and write my commands on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people."

Prophets also told people about a coming king, one who would rule forever and save them—a *Messiah*. God gave the prophets visions of what this Messiah would be like. (Listen carefully to these as they will tie into some future stories).

Prophets like Isaiah told them that ...

- ... He will be a descendant of King David.
- ... A virgin will give birth to him in Bethlehem.
- ... A messenger from the wilderness will challenge people to prepare for his coming.
- ... He will bring good news and healing to the poor, brokenhearted and the sick.
- ... He will do no wrong, living a life without sin.
- ... He will be beaten, whipped, and wounded—all so we can have peace, healing and forgiveness.
- ... He will be silent when faced with accusations. He will be put on trial and thrown in prison.
- ... His hands and feet will be pierced. He will be killed like a criminal and buried in a rich man's tomb.
- ... God will lay the punishment and guilt for all of our sins on him. His life will be made an offering for us.
- ... Because of him, many will be made right with God.

After these prophets, God did not speak to humans again for 400 hundred years...



STORY FROM...

Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 2 Samuel, 2 Kings

PROPHECIES FROM...

2 Sam. 7, Isaiah 7, 9, 40, 53, 61, Psalm 22, Micah 5, Zachariah 12

# Judges, Kings & Prophets

▲ **RETELL THE STORY** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*

▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

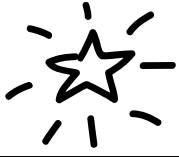
- What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?
- What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?
- Why did God tell the Israelites to drive out everyone who lived in Canaan? What happened?
- What is the pattern that the Israelites got into?
- What was the role of the prophets? What did the prophets foretell about the Messiah?

## FROM ALL OF THE STORIES SO FAR...

- What have you seen for the first time in these stories? What do you wonder about?
- What common themes run through all of the stories?  
*God wants us to live closely with him—listening and obeying.  
He provides the best possible way of life for us to live.  
God desires to rescue his creation and bring them back to himself.  
He will go to amazing lengths to accomplish this.  
Our sins require sacrifice—a life for a life.*
- What have we learned about what humans are like? Where have we seen that?
- What have we learned about what God is like? Where have we seen that?  
*He does what is good, right, and perfect—he is holy. He is powerful, creative, knows all things, has control over the elements, punishes rebellion, keeps his promises, does not allow evil to remain with him, provides a way of forgiveness, loves his creation, provides us with the best way to live, wants to protect us and bless us, wants us to continue his blessings, and much more!*

◆ **CONNECTION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*

- Are we like the Israelites? What patterns do we get into that are not good?
- What does it mean for you to live in God's ways?
- How could a group of people committed to live in God's ways and be God's blessing make a difference in the world?



STORY FROM...  
Matthew 1-2  
Luke 1-2

# The Birth of Jesus

◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** *(Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)*

▼ **NARRATE** *(Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)*

400 years had passed since God had spoken to his people. The Israelites, called Jews, had been under the control of other nations for hundreds of years. They were now ruled by the Romans, the most powerful empire that had ever existed. The Jews were still waiting and hoping for a king who would come to save them and lead them into victory.

Finally, God sent an angel to a young woman named Mary in the town of Nazareth. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph who was a descendant of King David.

The angel, named Gabriel, appeared to her and said, *"Don't be afraid Mary, God has chosen to bless you! You will become pregnant and have a son and you are to name him Jesus. (which means 'God saves'). He will become a king whose kingdom will never end!"*

Mary asked the angel, *"But how can I have a baby, I am still a virgin?"*  
The angel replied, *"This will happen supernaturally by God's Spirit, so this baby will be called God's Son. Remember... nothing is impossible with God!"*

Mary said, *"I am God's servant. May everything you have said come true!"*  
After that Mary sang to God thanking him for choosing to bless her.  
And just as the angel had said, Mary became pregnant.

When Joseph found out that Mary was expecting a child, he decided to break off their engagement quietly. The law would have permitted him to have her killed if she had an affair.

But one night Joseph had a dream. An angel appeared to him and said, *"Joseph, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. The child in her is from God. You are to give him the name Jesus for he will save the people from their sins."*

So Joseph took Mary as his wife, but he did not sleep with her until after the baby was born.

Months later, as Joseph and Mary were traveling to Bethlehem, the time came for Mary to give birth. No rooms were available for them at the local inns so they found an animal stable, and that is where their baby was born. They named the boy Jesus, meaning "one who saves", just as the angel had told them. Mary wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him in a feed trough.

That night a group of shepherds were out in the fields taking care of their sheep when an angel suddenly appeared and frightened them. The angel said, *"Don't be afraid, I am bringing good news for everyone! The one who will save you, the Messiah, has been born tonight in Bethlehem! You will know it's him when you find a baby in a stable wrapped in strips of cloth."*

The shepherds said to each other, *"Let's go to Bethlehem as fast as we can to see the miracle God told us about."* When the shepherds ran into town they found Joseph, Mary and the baby in the stable just as the angel had said. After this they went and told everyone what they had heard and seen—and the people were truly amazed!

*(story continued on next page)*



STORY FROM...  
Matthew 1-2  
Luke 1-2

# The Birth of Jesus

*(story continued from previous page)*

A few months later, wise men traveled from distant lands to find the newborn king.

A star had guided them from the east to Bethlehem and stopped over the place where Mary and Joseph were living. As the wise men entered the house they were overcome with joy and knelt down and worshipped Jesus. They brought him expensive gifts of gold, spices and perfumes.

Eventually Joseph and Mary moved back to Nazareth where Jesus grew strong, wise and full of God's grace.

When Jesus was twelve years old, he and his family attended the annual Passover Festival in Jerusalem. *(Do you remember the first Passover?)*

On the way home, Joseph and Mary assumed that Jesus was in their caravan but traveling with some of their other relatives. Later, when they stopped to sleep for the night, they realized he was nowhere to be found.

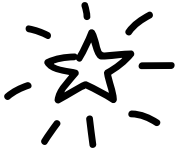
In a panic, Joseph and Mary went back to Jerusalem to look for Jesus. Three days later they finally found him—he was in the temple courts discussing deep questions with the religious teachers. The teachers were all amazed at his understanding and insights. His parents didn't know what to think.

*"Son!"* his mother said to him. *"Why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been frantic and have searched for you everywhere."*

*"But why did you need to search?"* Jesus asked. *"You should have known that I would be in my Father's house."* But Joseph and Mary didn't understand what he meant.

So Jesus returned to Nazareth with his parents and was obedient to them. His mother thought deeply about what had happened.

Jesus grew in both height and wisdom and was loved by God and everyone who knew him.



STORY FROM...  
Matthew 1–2  
Luke 1–2

# The Birth of Jesus

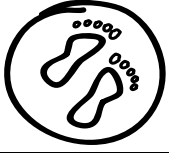
▲ **RETELL THE STORY** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*

▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?
- What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?
- What did we learn about Joseph? ...about Mary?
- What was unique about Jesus' birth? Where was he born?
- Why do you think it was important for Jesus to be born of a virgin mother?
- Who was Jesus a descendant of? How might this be significant?
- What else did you hear in this story that reminds you of what the prophets said about the promised Messiah?
- What does the name Jesus mean?  
*Another name given to Jesus was Emmanuel, which means 'God with us'!*
- We have all probably heard this story before as part of "The Christmas Story". What jumps out at you now as new or different?

◆ **CONNECTION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*

- How do you think that people reacted to being told that the Messiah had been born?
- How would you have reacted? Would you have expected his entrance to the world to be different?
- If Jesus was sent to give the world a great gift, why do you think we focus so much on what we get at Christmas?
- How can we best celebrate and remember the birth of Jesus?
- What can you do to celebrate this personally?



STORY FROM...  
Matthew 3, 4 Mark 1  
Luke 3, 4 John 1

# Baptism & Temptation

◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** *(Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)*

▼ **NARRATE** *(Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)*

## SCENE 1: Baptism

God sent a messenger named John to tell people to get ready because the Messiah was coming. John was a distant cousin of Jesus, born just six months before him. He was a rugged man who lived in the wilderness, ate locusts and wild honey, and wore clothes made out of camel hair.

John boldly challenged the Jews, *"Don't just say that you love God—prove it with your life. Turn from your sins and turn to God!"*

He became known as John the Baptizer as he dunked those who had confessed their sins in the Jordan River. Baptism was a symbol of being washed clean from your sins and choosing a new way of living.

When Jewish leaders asked John if he was the Messiah, he responded, *"No! But someone is coming soon who is far greater than me—I'm not worthy to untie his sandals or even to be his slave. You see... I baptize with water, but he will baptize with God's Spirit!"*

Soon after that Jesus came to be baptized. When John saw him he said, *"I'm the one who needs to be baptized by you."*

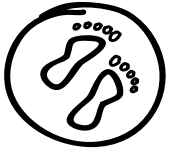
But Jesus insisted, so John baptized him in front of the crowds. When Jesus came out of the water, God's Spirit came down from the sky—it looked like a dove floating down, and it rested on him. Then a voice from heaven said, *"You are my son who I love—you bring me great joy!"*

▲ **RETELL THE SCENE** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*

▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?
- What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?
- What do we learn about John from this scene?
- What was John's message?
- Why do you think people came to be baptized by John?
- What do we learn about Jesus from this scene?

*(story continued on next page)*



STORY FROM...  
Matthew 3, 4 Mark 1  
Luke 3, 4 John 1

# Baptism & Temptation

## SCENE 2: Temptation

After leaving the Jordan River, Jesus was led by God's Spirit to go into the wilderness. There, Satan, one of the angels that had rebelled against God, tempted him for forty days and forty nights. During that entire time, Jesus didn't eat anything and became very hungry.

Satan tried to deceive Jesus saying, *"Since you're God's Son, why don't you turn these rocks into loaves of bread to eat?"*

Jesus answered him, *"No—When God spoke to Moses he said, 'People need more than bread to live—they must find their life in the words of God.'"*

Then, Satan took Jesus to the top of the tallest building in Jerusalem and said, *"If you are God's Son, jump off! Your sacred writings say, 'God will send his angels to catch you, and you won't even hit the ground!'"*

Jesus replied, *"Moses also wrote, 'Do not even try to test God.'"*

Next, Satan took Jesus to the peak of a huge mountain. He showed Him all of the nations of the world in their brilliance. He said to Jesus, *"I will give you all of this—anything you want—if you'll kneel down and worship me."*

Jesus responded, *"Get away from me, Satan! It's commanded, 'Put God above everything else and only worship him!'"*

Satan went away and angels came and took care of Jesus. At this time, he was about thirty years old. Throughout Jesus' life, he never sinned or rebelled against God. He always chose to do what was good and right and true.

Not long after that, John saw Jesus coming toward him and yelled out, *"Look! There is God's Passover Lamb—he'll take away the sins of the world! God showed me he's the Messiah we've been waiting for."*

As Jesus walked along the sea, he told some of John's followers, *"Come and follow me!"* From then on, Jesus surrounded himself with a few close followers, called disciples, showing them how to live in the ways of God.

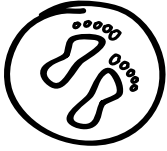
▲ **RETELL THE SCENE** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*

▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- **What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?**
- **What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?**
- **Where have we seen Satan or evil tempt a person in the stories before?**  
**How did that person respond?**
- **How did Jesus respond in this scene to Satan's temptations?**  
*Resisted, quoted God's words to Satan*
- **In your own words, what was Satan tempting Jesus with?** (3 things)

*(story continued on next page)*





STORY FROM...  
Matthew 3, 4 Mark 1  
Luke 3, 4 John 1

# Baptism & Temptation

## SCENE 3: Disciples

Not long after that, John saw Jesus coming toward him and yelled out, "Look! There is God's Passover Lamb—he'll take away the sins of the world! God showed me he's the Messiah we've been waiting for."

As Jesus walked along the sea he told some of John's followers, "Come and follow me!"

From then on Jesus surrounded himself with a few close followers, called disciples, showing them how to live in the ways of God.

Then Jesus traveled throughout the area meeting in market places, homes and Jewish synagogues, teaching people God's ways. He brought a new message to them saying, "The Kingdom of God has come—now turn from your sins and turn to God!"

Jesus healed people with every kind of sickness and disease. News spread quickly about him and huge crowds began following him wherever he went. People traveled from miles away to be near him and see the amazing miracles he performed.

▲ **RETELL THE SCENE** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*

▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?
- What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?
  
- Why did John say, "Look! There is God's Passover Lamb"?
- What details do you remember about the first Passover lamb from our previous stories?
- Why do you think he was convinced that Jesus was the Messiah?
  
- Why do you think crowds of people wanted to be near Jesus?
  
- Who were the disciples? What was Jesus teaching and showing them?
  
- What do you think Jesus meant when he said, "the Kingdom of God has come"?
  
- **What do we learn about Jesus from this story (all three scenes)?**  
*He never rebelled against God. He is like God. God called him his son who he loves.  
He has amazing powers. He knows the writings of his people—the Hebrews.  
People wanted to be near him. He taught in new ways.*

◆ **CONNECTION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*

- How do you think you would have responded to Jesus?
- What does it mean to be tempted? What can we be tempted by?
- Which one of the three temptations would be the toughest for you resist right now? Why?



STORY FROM...  
Matthew 9,12 Mark 2  
Luke 5,11 John 5

# The Pharisees

◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** *(Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)*

▼ **NARRATE** *(Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)*

## SCENE 1: Healing a Paralyzed Man

Crowds continued to surround Jesus everywhere he went. Once, when he was teaching in a house where he was staying, so many people came to hear him that the house was completely packed. There wasn't room for one more person—even outside of the door!

Four men brought their paralyzed friend who was lying on a mat to see Jesus, believing he would heal him. But the only way they could get him in the house was to climb up on the roof, dig a hole through the clay tiles and lower him down! Jesus was impressed with their effort and faith. He told the paralyzed man, *"Don't worry... your sins are forgiven!"*

Some religious leaders, called Pharisees, were watching and listening to Jesus. The Pharisees were a powerful group of Jewish teachers. In addition to the laws given to Moses, they created their own set of strict rules on how to follow God.

They said to each other, *"Who does this man think he is? No one can forgive sins but God!"*

But Jesus knew what they were thinking, so he asked them, *"Why are you offended? Would you rather I would've just said 'pick up your mat and walk'? I will prove to you that I have the authority on earth to forgive sins."*

Then Jesus told the paralyzed man, *"Now get up—take your mat and walk home—you are healed."*

The man was no longer paralyzed! He jumped up and pushed his way out the door and went home. Everyone there was amazed and thanked God saying, *"We've never seen anything like this before!"*

▲ **RETELL THE SCENE** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*

▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?
- What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?
- How might you have responded if you were in that house?
- Why do you think Jesus said, *"Don't worry... your sins are forgiven"*?
- What was Jesus teaching them in this story?

*(story continued on next page)*



STORY FROM...  
Matthew 9,12 Mark 2  
Luke 5,11 John 5

# The Pharisees

## SCENE 2: Eating with Sinners

Soon after that, Jesus was walking along the lakeshore when he saw a tax collector named Matthew sitting at his collection booth. *(In that day Tax collectors were wealthy men, hated for their reputation of being dishonest and corrupt.)*

Jesus said to him, *"Come, be my disciple!"*  
So Matthew got up, left everything, and followed Jesus.

That night Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to be his dinner guests. He also invited some of his tax collector friends and many other people that were known to be sinners in the community. But when some of the Jewish religious leaders, called Pharisees, saw Jesus eating with them they said to his disciples, *"Why does he eat with those terrible people?"*

When Jesus heard this he told them, *"Healthy people don't need a doctor, sick people do. I have come to call sinners to a changed life—inside and out—not to spend my time with those who think they're already good enough."*

On another night Jesus met with some of the Jewish religious leaders for dinner. They were shocked and offended when Jesus did not wash up according to Jewish customs before the meal.

Then Jesus said to them, *"You Pharisees are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but the inside is still filthy. Your lives are just like this—so clean when people are watching—but inside you are full of hate, greed and pride. You're worse than your Hebrew ancestors; you have great knowledge about the things of God, but you don't enter God's kingdom, in fact, you keep people from entering it!"*

▲ **RETELL THE SCENE** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*

▼ **CONNECTION** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- **What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?**
- **What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?**
- **Jesus called Matthew to, "come, be my disciple!" What is a disciple? Do you think this was an easy decision for Matthew?**
- **Why do think people just dropped everything to follow Jesus?**
- **Who did Jesus spend time with? Why did the religious leaders have a problem with this?**  
*They understood God in terms of boundaries—laws... food... rituals... and added their own interpretation and strictness to this.*
- **What do we learn about Jesus from this scene?** **(story continued on next page)**



STORY FROM...  
Matthew 9,12 Mark 2  
Luke 5,11 John 5

# The Pharisees

## SCENE 3: Healing on the Sabbath

Jesus continued to travel around teaching and healing, sometimes on the Sabbath (the day of rest). The Jewish leaders were upset about this and confronted Jesus for breaking the Sabbath rules. But Jesus replied, *"God—my Father—never stops doing good, so why should I?"*

This really angered them. Not only was he breaking their Sabbath rules, but he was calling God "his" Father instead of "our" father, making himself equal with God! The Jewish leaders continued to challenge Jesus with many hostile questions, trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him.

Jesus went on to explain to them, *"I don't do any of this on my own. I only do what my Father tells me to do. He is the source of all life and has given me the power to heal, raise the dead and give life. Those who listen and believe in me will find new life with God that is never ending."*

As Jesus finished speaking, the Pharisees and religious leaders were furious. From that time on the Jewish leaders began planning out how they could have Jesus killed.

▲ **RETELL THE SCENE** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*

▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

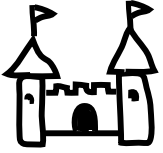
- What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?
- What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?
  
- What is the Sabbath?
- What was Jesus claiming about himself from this last scene?
- Where does Jesus' authority and power come from?
  
- What do we learn about Jesus' relationship with God from this story?
- Who else had a perfect relationship with God from the previous stories?
- What was that relationship like?

*From all three of the scenes we just looked at...*

- What do we know about the Pharisees?
- What are we learning about Jesus?
- What do you think was Jesus' Mission?
- What do you think it would take for this Mission to be accomplished on earth?

◆ **CONNECTION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*

- What do you think is more important—forgiveness or healing?
- How are we just like the Pharisees? How can we become clean on the inside?



STORY FROM...

Matthew 5, 7, 10, 13, 18-20 Mark 3-6, 10, 13  
Luke 6, 8-10, 12-15, 17 John 3

# The Kingdom

- ◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** *(Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)*
- ▼ **NARRATE** *(Don't just read it-know it and bring it to life!)*

## SCENE 1: Kingdom Message

Jesus continued to teach people, *"The Kingdom of God has come—turn from your sins and turn to God!"*

One day, he climbed up a hill with a group of his closest followers. They sat down together and Jesus began to teach them about God's Kingdom.

He said, *"God blesses those who realize their need for him;  
the humble and poor, the gentle and merciful—the Kingdom of God belongs to them.  
God blesses the pure in heart and those who hunger and thirst to be with Him.  
You'll be blessed when you are hated, mocked and excluded because you are my followers.  
Be happy about it—you will get great rewards in heaven!"*

Then Jesus went on to teach about God's laws that were given to Moses.

Jesus said, *"Don't think I came to get rid of the laws of Moses and the writings of the Prophets.  
I have come to fulfill them! God's laws are alive and will last forever—live by them and show others  
the way. That's how you'll find honor in the Kingdom."*

He went on to teach, *"The laws and commands tell you not to murder, but I say if you hate someone  
or insult them, you are just as guilty as a murderer. Your words and actions bring judgment on you."  
"The laws also tell us to never have sex with someone else's spouse. But I say anyone who even looks  
at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery in his heart."*

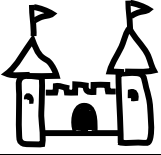
He also taught them, *"If someone steals your shirt from you, offer them your coat too. Live generously!  
Love your enemies. Anyone can love their friends, but you are to love the unlovable. You must live  
differently, doing what is good, right and perfect—just like God your Father."*

The people were amazed at Jesus' teaching; he had real power and authority—unlike their teachers  
of the law.

Later the Pharisees asked Jesus, *"When is this 'Kingdom' that you are teaching about going to  
come?"*

Jesus replied, *"The Kingdom of God is not something you can predict. People will not say, 'here it is,'  
or 'there it is,' because the Kingdom of God is within you."*

- ▲ **RETELL THE SCENE** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*



STORY FROM...

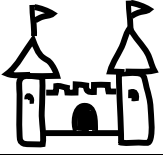
Matthew 5, 7, 10, 13, 18–20 Mark 3–6, 10, 13  
Luke 6, 8–10, 12–15, 17 John 3

# The Kingdom

▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- **What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?**
- **What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?**
- **What do we learn about the Kingdom of God from this scene?  
What does it look like? Where is it?**
- **In your own words, what is Jesus teaching his followers in this scene?**  
*The Pharisees had created a way for humans to be accepted by God by their actions. Jesus took the commands and laws that God gave Moses and revealed the inner attitudes behind the actions—showing that outward actions are not enough. Our heart is more important than our actions to God.*
- **In this story, Jesus shows people how to live in God's ways.  
Where in previous stories have we seen God do this?**  
*Adam & Eve (God walked with them teaching them how to live closely to him), Cain—"if you do what is right", Noah—"life is in the blood", Moses—laws & commands, Prophets—God spoke through them to remind people of how to live in his ways.*
- **How are Jesus' Kingdom teachings similar to what God taught them in the past stories?**  
*Since the beginning of creation God has been showing people how to live closely with him and live in his ways—the ways of his Kingdom. Jesus continues to show us how to live in these ways through his teaching and through living out the Kingdom perfectly with his life.*
- **What do you think Jesus meant by saying "I have come to fulfill the laws of Moses and the writings of the Prophets?"**
- **What do we learn about Jesus from this scene?**

*(story continued on next page)*



STORY FROM...

Matthew 5, 7, 10, 13, 18–20 Mark 3–6, 10, 13  
Luke 6, 8–10, 12–15, 17 John 3

# The Kingdom

## SCENE 2: Parables of the Kingdom

Jesus continued to teach about the Kingdom of God using short stories that had powerful meanings, called parables.

He said, *“The Kingdom of God is like a tiny seed that is planted in a field. This seed may be small at first, but it grows into a large tree where birds can come and find shelter.”*

Jesus told dozens of stories like this to the crowds. He said the Kingdom is...

*Like a hidden treasure buried in a field — worth diligently searching for.  
Like yeast spread in a large ball of dough — just a little will change a lot.  
Like a precious pearl — worth trading everything for.  
Like a great feast — where the poor and the outcast all get invited,  
and on and on...*

People were amazed at Jesus’ teaching and wisdom. They understood some of these pictures, but others remained a mystery to them.

A young man came up to Jesus and asked, *“What good things must I do to get into the Kingdom?”*

Jesus replied, *“God is the only one who is good. Follow his commandments.”*

The man said, *“I have obeyed his commands—what else must I do?”*

*“Go and sell everything you have and give the money to the poor. Then, come and follow me.”*

When the man heard this, he went away very sad because he didn’t want give up his great wealth and possessions.

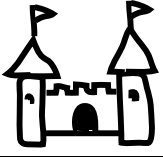
Jesus told his disciples, *“It’s very hard for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of God—it’s easier for a camel to fit through the eye of a needle!”*

*“Then who in the world can enter the Kingdom?”* asked his disciples.

Jesus replied, *“The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless they have been born a second time by God’s Spirit. Humans can only give human life, but God’s Spirit gives new life in the Kingdom.”*

*The entrance to the Kingdom of God is narrow—only a few will find it. But the road that leads to destruction is very wide and many will chose this way and live only for themselves.”*

▲ **RETELL THE SCENE** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*



STORY FROM...

Matthew 5, 7, 10, 13, 18–20 Mark 3–6, 10, 13  
Luke 6, 8–10, 12–15, 17 John 3

# The Kingdom

▼ **DIALOGUE** (These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)

- What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?
- What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?
- Why do you think Jesus taught in parables?
- What do you think the Kingdom of God is? Why is it so hard to describe?
- What kind of king / kingdom do you think the Jewish people were hoping for? What did they want to conquer?
- What kind of kingdom was Jesus establishing? What do you think he was he looking to conquer?
- Why do you think Jesus chose 12 to be his apostles? What did he send them to do?

## SCENE 3: Jesus and Nicodemus

One night a Pharisee named Nicodemus came to Jesus and said, "Rabbi, we know you were sent by God to teach us. Your miracles haven't proven to us that God is with you."

Jesus replied, "You're right—but unless someone is born a second time they will never understand God's Kingdom."

"What do you mean?" Nicodemus questioned, "How can someone who is fully grown climb back inside their mother and be born a second time?"

Jesus answered him, "The truth is, no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless they have been born a second time by God's Spirit. Humans can only give human life, but God's Spirit gives new life in the Kingdom."

"How can this happen!?" Nicodemus asked.

Jesus replied, "You are a respected Jewish teacher, but you don't know this simple truth? If you won't believe me when I teach you about everyday things, how will you believe me when I tell you about God's Kingdom?"

"What I am telling you is true. God showed his great love for people by sending me—his only son—to this world. Anyone who believes in me and lives in my ways will find life that is complete and eternal! He sent me here to save people—not to judge them. Those who want to live in sin and darkness will reject me and bring God's judgment on themselves. But those who want to live in God's ways will trust me and live forever!"





STORY FROM...

Matthew 5, 7, 10, 13, 18-20 Mark 3-6, 10, 13  
Luke 6, 8-10, 12-15, 17 John 3

# The Kingdom

- ▲ **RETELL THE SCENE** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*
- ▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*
  - What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?
  - What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?
  - Why do you think what Jesus was teaching was hard to understand for Nicodemus (or anyone)?
  - How does someone "enter the Kingdom" according to this scene?  
According to all three scenes?
  - What do we learn about Jesus from this story?
  - What do you think is the connection between living in God's ways and believing in Jesus?
- ◆ **CONNECTION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*
  - What does it mean to "believe" in Jesus? How is someone different who does this?
  - Describe what a group of people "living in God's Kingdom" would be like today.  
How do they treat each other? ...the poor and needy? ... God?  
How would they be different in our world?
  - What do you think it means for YOU to live in the Kingdom of God?  
What are some specific ways you can do that?



STORY FROM...  
Matthew 8  
Mark 4, 5

# Miracles

- ◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** (*Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story*)
- ▼ **NARRATE** (*Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!*)

## SCENE 1: Calming the Storm

Evening came, and Jesus was exhausted from teaching all day. He asked his disciples to get into a boat so they could cross the lake and get away from the crowds. As they took off, Jesus went to the back of the boat, put his head on a cushion and fell asleep. All of sudden, a terrible storm came up with strong winds and crashing waves. No matter how hard the disciples tried, they couldn't keep the boat from filling with water.

The disciples ran to the back of the boat in a panic to wake Jesus, shouting, "Teacher, don't you care that we're going to drown?"

Jesus awoke, stood up, and said to the wind and waves, "Quiet! Be still."  
As soon as he said this, the wind stopped blowing and the sea became calm.

Then, Jesus asked them, "Why are you so afraid? Don't you believe in me yet?"

The disciples just sat there—filled with wonder!

They asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Jesus healed people with every kind of sickness and disease. News spread quickly about him and huge crowds began following him wherever he went. People traveled from miles away to be near him and see the incredible miracles he performed.

- ▲ **RETELL THE SCENE** (*This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story*)
- ▼ **DIALOGUE** (*These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story*)

- **What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?**
- **What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?**

- **Which of our other stories talk about the wind and the waves?**

**What happen in those stories?**

*When Israel crossed the Red Sea and God brought a strong east wind to open the sea and returned it by bringing a strong west wind in order to kill the army of Pharaoh.  
Noah and the Ark...*

- **If you were in the boat, how do you think you would have responded to Jesus?**
- **What do we learn about the disciples from this scene?**  
**Why do you think they woke Jesus up? Why do you think they waited so long?**
- **Why do you think Jesus waited to calm the storm until the boat was full of water?**  
*Maybe he was just a really hard sleeper!*

- **What do we learn about Jesus from this scene?** (*story continued on next page*)



STORY FROM...  
Matthew 8  
Mark 4, 5

# Miracles

## SCENE 2: Recognized by Demons

When Jesus reached the other side of the lake, a wild man, filled with demons ran towards him from a nearby cemetery. This man had been chained to some of the tombs to keep him from hurting people, but he snapped the chains from his wrists and ankles. Now he wandered around all day and night, screaming and hitting himself with stones. No one could control him because he was too strong!

As he approached Jesus said to him, *"Come out of this man you demons!"*

The man fell down in front of Jesus and screamed, *"Why are you bothering me Jesus, Son of God? Please, don't torture me!"*

Then Jesus asked, *"What is your name?"*

*"Legion,"* the man replied, *"because there are many of us inside of this man."*

Over and over the demons begged Jesus to not send them far away. There happened to be a heard of pigs feeding on a hillside nearby. *"Send us into those pigs!"* the demons pleaded.

Jesus replied, *"All right, go!"* And the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs.

The entire heard of two thousand pigs immediately rushed down the steep hillside into the lake where they drowned!

Those who witnessed what had happened ran into town to tell everyone they could find. Soon, the entire town came out to see what had happened. They were astonished when they saw the man fully clothed and no longer insane! Then the crowd begged Jesus to go away and leave them alone.

So Jesus and his followers went back to their boat. As they were leaving, the man who had been filled with demons asked if he could go with them.

Jesus said to him, *"You need to go back to your friends and tell them the great things the Lord has done for you and how he showed you mercy."*

So the man went and visited towns all over that region, telling people about the great things Jesus had done. Everyone he talked to was amazed by what had happened.

▲ **RETELL THE SCENE** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*



STORY FROM...  
Matthew 8  
Mark 4, 5

# Miracles

▼ **DIALOGUE** (These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)

- What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?
- What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?
- What do we find out about the man who met up with Jesus in this scene?  
(Describe everything that comes to mind)
- What are demons? Where did they come from? *Fallen angels, created by God.*
- How did God treat the demons in our first story?  
*God judged them and cast them out of His presence.*
- How do you think the demons knew who Jesus was? Why were they afraid of him?
- How did people who saw what happened respond?
- Why do you think the crowd begged Jesus to go away?
- How did the man who was set free from the demons respond?
- Why did Jesus tell him he couldn't go on the boat?
- What do we learn about Jesus from this story?

## Scene 3: Power over Death

When Jesus and his disciples went back across the lake, a large crowd was already waiting for him on the beach.

One of the local Jewish leaders named Jairus (JAY-rus) ran to Jesus and fell down at his feet. He begged Jesus to heal his twelve year-old daughter. *"My little girl is very sick and about to die,"* he cried. *"Please come and heal her so she can live."*

Jesus went with Jairus towards his house and the crowd followed behind them. Along the way some of Jarius' friends stopped him saying, *"We just came from your house. Your daughter has died. There's no use bringing the teacher to your house now."*

But Jesus ignored them and said to Jairus, *"Don't be afraid—just trust me."* Then Jesus told the crowd to stay back, and he only let three of his disciples, Peter, James and John, come with them.

When they arrived at Jarius' house there was a crowd of people inside weeping loudly. Jesus asked them, *"Why are you crying? The girl is not dead—she's sleeping."*

The crowd laughed at him. Then Jesus sent everyone outside except for the girl's parents and the disciples that were with him. When they went into the girl's room, Jesus took the girl's hand and said, *"Little girl, get up!"*

Immediately the girl jumped out of bed and began walking around! Her parents were absolutely amazed! Jesus told them to give her something to eat, and asked them not to tell anyone about what they'd just seen.



STORY FROM...  
Matthew 8  
Mark 4, 5

# Miracles

- ▲ **RETELL THE SCENE** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*
- ▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?
- What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?
- What kinds of emotions do you think the girl's parents were feeling during this scene?
- Why do you think that people doubted Jesus in this scene?
- Why do you think that Jesus sometimes asked people not to say anything about his miracles?
- How did people usually respond to Jesus' miracles?
- What do we learn about Jesus from this scene?

*From all three of the scenes we just looked at...*

- What are some of the reasons that Jesus performed miracles?
- Did people always believe in Jesus after seeing him perform miracles? Why or why not?
- From the stories, what has Jesus shown that he has power over?  
Where have we seen power like this in the stories before?  
Is anything or anyone more powerful than Jesus?
- What are we learning about Jesus from our stories so far?

- ◆ **CONNECTION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*

- What amazes you the most about Jesus?
- What miracle do you think would have amazed you the most?
- How should we respond to Jesus today?



STORY FROM...

Matt 26     Mark 14  
Luke 22     John 13-17

# The New Covenant

◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** *(Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)*

▼ **TELL THE STORY** *(Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)*

Jesus and his disciples traveled to Jerusalem for the Passover Festival. The Pharisees and other Jewish leaders were becoming increasingly upset with Jesus and his claims. They looked for ways to trap Jesus into saying something they could arrest him for, but Jesus was too wise for them.

Many of Jesus' stories pointed out the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders. He said, *"When the Pharisees and teachers share with you God's commands, listen to them—but don't follow their example. They don't live out what they teach."*

The High Priest met with these leaders to discuss capturing Jesus and putting him to death. *"We can't arrest him during Passover,"* they agreed, *"or it will create a huge riot."*

That week, Jesus and his 12 disciples met together in a home to celebrate the Passover.

Before the meal began, Jesus got up from the table, tied a towel around his waist, and poured some water into a bowl. Then he went to each of his disciples and washed his feet, wiping them with the towel he had around him. This shocked the disciples... only hired servants are supposed to wash guests' feet! They wondered why he was doing this!

After washing their feet, Jesus sat down and asked, *"Do you understand what I was doing? Since I have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow."*

During the meal, Jesus picked up some bread, thanked God for it, and broke it into pieces. Giving it to his disciples he said, *"Take this and eat it, this is my body given for you."*

Then Jesus picked up a cup of wine and thanked God for it. He gave them the cup and said, *"All of you, drink this. It is my blood given for you—a new covenant between God and his people. It is poured out to forgive the sins of many. Remember me each time you eat and drink these things together."*

*"When you see what happens tonight, you will all abandon me. It is part of God's plan that I will be betrayed and die. But don't fear, I will rise again from the dead!"*

He knew that his disciple Judas would soon betray him, bringing Jewish soldiers to capture him later that night when no one was around.

Jesus continued to speak to them, saying, *"Now I am giving you a new commandment: Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for each other will prove to the world that you are my disciples. The greatest love is shown when people lay down their lives for each other.*

*But you can't do this on your own. You must remain in my love and obey what I have taught you. If you remain in me, I will remain in you... like branches connected to a vine... if you remain in me, you will produce much fruit. This will bring great joy to you and to God our Father!"*

Then Jesus said, *"I will be leaving you soon, but God will send his Spirit, who will never leave you and who will guide you in all the ways of truth."*

After the Passover meal, when it was dark, Jesus and his disciples went to an olive grove to pray.



STORY FROM...

Matt 26    Mark 14  
Luke 22    John 13-17

# The New Covenant

▲ **RETELL THE STORY** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*

▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?
- What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?
- Why was Jesus going to Jerusalem? What do we know about this celebration?
- Why did the Jewish leaders want to kill Jesus?
- What did Jesus do right before the Passover meal began? Why did he wash their feet?
- Jesus said, *"Take this and eat it, this is my body given for you" and "...drink this. It is my blood given for you – a new covenant between God and his people."*

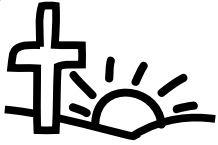
What was the Covenant God made with Abraham and his people? What did it require?

What is God's New Covenant with his people? What do you think it requires?

- What was the new commandment that Jesus gave his disciples?  
How were his disciples to show this love?

◆ **CONNECTION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*

- Jesus said, *"You must remain in my love and obey what I have taught you. If you remain in me, I will remain in you... like branches connected to a vine..."*  
How do we remain in Jesus' love?



STORY FROM...

Matt 26–28    Mark 14–16  
Luke 22–24    John 13,15–20

# Death & Resurrection

◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORIES** *(Guide the group as they give an overview of previous stories and retell the last story)*

▼ **NARRATE** *(Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)*

After the Passover meal, when it was dark, Jesus and his disciples went to an olive grove to pray.

Filled with pain and sorrow, he fell facedown on the ground.

*"Abba, Father," Jesus cried ('abba' means daddy), "...everything is possible for you.*

*If there is another way besides my death, please let that happen... but I will do whatever you ask."*

Just as he had finished praying, Judas showed up with an armed mob.

He greeted Jesus with a kiss—a sign to show the guards which one they should arrest.

Jesus said to them, *"Am I a dangerous criminal that you need weapons to capture me?*

*Why didn't you arrest me in the Temple where I've been teaching everyday?*

*No! This is part of God's plan, just as the prophets predicted long ago."*

When the guards arrested Jesus and dragged him away, the disciples ran away and hid.

The guards beat Jesus and brought him before the Jewish leaders for questioning.

They asked, *"Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?"*

Jesus answered, *"I am, and you will see me seated next to God in power, coming back on the clouds of heaven."*

When Jesus said this, the High Priest tore his clothing in horror and said, *"Any man who claims to be God must be put to death."* Then they slapped Jesus in the face and spit on him.

Jesus was brought to the Roman governor, Pilate, since Jews could not execute anyone without official approval. The Jewish leaders stirred up the crowds and pressured Pilate to have Jesus put to death. They shouted, *"Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"*

Pilate feared a riot would break out, so he handed Jesus over to the Roman soldiers to be crucified. Crucifixion was the most cruel and humiliating way to die.

Jesus was brutally beaten and whipped by the soldiers. They put a crown of sharp thorns on his head and a purple robe around his shoulders. *"Hail the King of the Jews!"* they laughed. All night, the Roman Soldiers continued to beat Jesus and mock him. When morning came, they led Jesus to a place called Skull Hill.

Like a criminal, Jesus was nailed to a heavy wooden cross between two thieves.

Hanging there, he cried out, *"Father, please forgive them—they don't know what they're doing."*

At noon, darkness filled the skies, blocking out the sun for three hours.

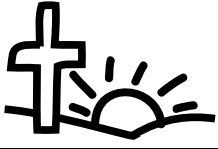
Suddenly, the thick curtain hanging in the Temple tore down the middle!

At that moment, Jesus shouted, *"Father! I give you my life... it is finished."*

Then Jesus breathed his last breath and died.

*(story continued on next page)*





STORY FROM...

Matt 26–28    Mark 14–16  
Luke 22–24    John 13,15–20

## Death & Resurrection

*(story continued from previous page)*

The soldiers broke the legs of the criminals crucified next to Jesus to speed up their deaths. When they found that Jesus was already dead, they didn't break his legs. But, to be sure, one of the soldiers stabbed him in the side with a spear and blood and water poured out.

Late Friday afternoon, Jesus' body was taken down from the cross, wrapped in long strips of cloth, and buried in a rich man's tomb. A large stone was rolled over the entrance to the tomb, and Roman guards were posted to make sure nothing happened to his body.

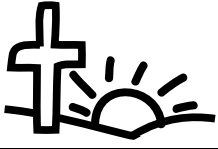
*(Pause here for a moment)*

Early on Sunday morning, some of the women who followed Jesus went to prepare his body for burial. When they arrived at the tomb, they saw the stone was rolled away and the soldiers were gone!

Suddenly, two angels appeared. They said, *"Why are you surprised? You are looking for Jesus, but he is not here—he's been raised from the dead."*

The women were excited but afraid and hurried to tell the disciples the amazing news. Some of them ran back to the tomb and looked inside for themselves... Jesus was not there!

▲ **RETELL THE STORY** *(This may seem redundant, but it is very effective in helping the listeners own the story)*



STORY FROM...

Matt 26–28    Mark 14–16  
Luke 22–24    John 13,15–20

# Death & Resurrec- tion

▼ **DIALOGUE** *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?
- What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?
- Why do you think the curtain in the Temple tore in half? What did the curtain separate?
- How did Jesus fulfill the prophet's predictions about the coming Messiah?
  - He will be beaten, whipped, and wounded*
  - He will be put on trial and thrown in prison.*
  - His hands and feet would be pierced.*
  - He will be killed like a criminal, then buried in a rich man's tomb.*
  - God will lay the punishment and guilt for all of our sins on him.*
  - His life will be made an offering for us.*
  - Because of Him, many will be made right with God.*
- How is Jesus being raised from the dead significant? What does it show us about him?

◆ **CONNECTION** *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*

- How was Jesus' death part of God's plan?
- How does this story affect your life?



STORY FROM...  
Matthew 28 John 14, 20  
Acts 1-2 1 Corinthians 15

## The Church

◀ **REVIEW PREVIOUS STORY** *(Guide the group as they retell the last story)*

▼ **NARRATE** *(Don't just read it—know it and bring it to life!)*

In the weeks that followed Jesus' death, he appeared to his disciples many times and was seen by over 500 eyewitnesses. Quickly, the news about his resurrection spread throughout the land.

One of Jesus' disciples named Thomas said, *"I won't believe he is alive unless I can put my fingers into the holes where his hands were nailed to the cross."*

A few days later, Jesus appeared to his disciples and said to Thomas, *"Put your fingers here—feel the hole in my hand. Put your hand into the wound on my side."*

Thomas shouted, *"It is you, Jesus—my God!"*

Then Jesus said, *"I will bless those even more who haven't seen, but still believe!"*

Soon after that, Jesus met with his disciples over a meal. He said, *"John baptized you in water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with God's Spirit. This will give you power to live in my ways and tell the entire world about me."*

Jesus commanded them, *"Go! Make disciples all over the world. Teach them to walk in my ways and obey me. I am leaving now to be with my father in heaven, but you will never be alone. God's Spirit will come and live inside of you—giving you peace and leading you in all the ways of truth."*

As the disciples watched, Jesus went up into the sky, disappearing in the clouds right in front of them!

*(Pause)*

A few weeks later, a group of 120 of Jesus' followers gathered to pray together in Jerusalem.

All of sudden, they heard a loud sound—like a roaring windstorm—that filled the house where they were meeting. Each of them was filled with God's Spirit and started speaking in languages that were not their own! They went out into the street and began to tell people about the great things that Jesus had done.

At that time, Jews from all over the world were living in Jerusalem. This roaring sound was heard throughout the entire city, and a large crowd had gathered outside the house to see what was going on.

When the people heard Jesus' followers speaking, they said, *"How can this be? They're from Galilee, but they're speaking in our own languages. This is amazing!"*

One of Jesus' disciples, named Peter, stepped forward to explain to the crowds what was happening. He said, *"This is part of God's prophecy being fulfilled. We are eyewitnesses of the fact that Jesus was raised from the dead and is the true Messiah!"*

*(story continued on next page)*



STORY FROM...  
Matthew 28 John 14, 20  
Acts 1–2 1 Corinthians 15

# The Church

*(story continued from previous page)*

Then Peter explained how Jesus had fulfilled everything the prophets said about the Messiah. He told the crowd, *"Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God. In Jesus, you will find forgiveness—he is the final sacrifice everyone's sin. This is God's new covenant offered not just to the Jews, but to all who want to be part of God's family."*

That day, thousands believed what Peter had said and turned from their sins to follow Jesus. They were baptized and became a part of God's family—once again empowered to live out God's promise to be a blessing to all people.

God's new covenant was not written on tablets of stone like before, but on the hearts and minds of his people, so they would always know how to live in his ways.

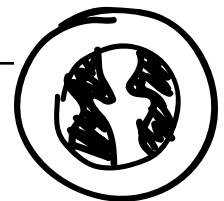
These followers of Jesus were deeply committed to God and each other... sharing everything they had, praying, learning God's ways together, and helping anyone in need—all with great joy and generosity. Daily, they ate together to honor and remember Jesus' life given for them.

They saw God do amazing things through them—miracles and healings—as he added people to their group each day.

This was the beginning of what the Bible calls the Church—a community of people all over the world who, because of Jesus, once again enjoy a life that is full and complete—as they follow in the ways of God.

*We can join this great story... the story can continue with us!*

## EPILOGUE: Creation Restored



STORY FROM... Luke 17 Acts 3 1 Corinthians 15 Revelation 21

Jesus promised to come back one day, saying, *"When I return again, everyone will know I am here. It'll be like a huge flash of lighting that fills the sky!"*

Jesus will return to destroy all evil, sin and rebellion. There will be no more sickness, pain, or death—He will wipe away every tear from our eyes. The world as we know it will be gone forever.

God will once again live with his people and enjoy a close relationship. Humans will receive new bodies and live on a new earth, restored back to the way God designed it. God's Kingdom will come in fullness, and everything will live under his rule.

As God's community on earth, we wait with great anticipation for this amazing day.

*Until then, may we live in God's ways, giving people a glimpse of what life is like in the coming Kingdom.*



STORY FROM...  
Matthew 28 John 14, 20  
Acts 1–2 1 Corinthians 15

# The Church

## ◀ REVIEW ALL THE STORIES

*(ALLOW EXTRA TIME FOR THIS! Come up with a creative way for the group to give a brief overview of all of the stories.)*

## ▼ DIALOGUE *(These questions are a good start for you to draw out the group's observations about the story)*

- What did you see in your mind as you listened to this story?
- What did you notice from the story for the first time? What do you wonder about?
- What was Jesus' command right before leaving his disciples?
- Is this command also for us today?
- What is a disciple? How do you make a disciple?
- What did he say about God's Spirit?  
*God's Spirit will come and live inside of you - giving you peace and leading you in all the ways of truth.*

**Think about all of the stories that we have heard together...**

- What have you learned from these stories? What amazes you?
- What common themes run through all of the stories?  
*God wants us to live closely with him—listening and obeying.  
He provides the best possible way of life for us to live.  
God desires to rescue his creation and bring them back to himself.  
He will go to amazing lengths to accomplish this.  
Our sins require sacrifice—a life for a life.*
- How do all of these stories connect as one big story?
- If you had to tell the entire story... the whole story... what would you tell us?
- What have we learned about what God is like? Where have we seen that? *(Make a list)*  
*He does what is good, right, and perfect—he is holy. He is powerful, creative, knows all things, has control over the elements, punishes rebellion, keeps his promises, does not allow evil to remain with him, provides a way of forgiveness, loves his creation, provides us with the best way to live, wants to protect us and bless us, wants us to continue his blessings, and much more!*
- How does this story continue (with us)?

## ◆ CONNECTION *(Optional questions that also work well in smaller groups)*

- After hearing this story, how is it changing your life? How will you live differently?
- Where does your story fit into this entire Story of God?
- If you were to draw a symbol (an icon) for your life story, what would it look like?
- What does it mean for you to live in God's ways right now?