

# Storytellers

LEADER INTRO

It was late in the fall of 2014. After a night back on the college campus we had each called ours, I was sitting in an Applebee's with two old friends and one new one. Our conversation was pleasant, surface-level, the opposite of noteworthy. Conversation shifted to current events as one person talked about their minor fear since Ebola had entered into the United States, and their great remorse for the Americans who had contracted it.

You know those moments when something snaps within you and you don't realize it until you're ranting (\*yelling\*) in an Applebee's?

Without thought, I was angry. I began ranting about the amount of privilege I felt Americans had to only begin worrying about a health epidemic once a handful of cases were documented in the United States. "This is a disease that has plagued Africa for decades, and now we care about it because it's on our shore," I began, "But even so, it will be contained. People with Ebola here will be quarantined, given the best possible health care we have and it will never become an epidemic, because we are so privileged and we only care about ourselves."

You know those moments when you're in an Applebee's and your three friends suddenly become silent because you just went off on them for bringing up Ebola? Yeah...

Thankfully, one friend **knew my story**, and interjected on my behalf.

"Emily lived in Africa for 6 months and is still really passionate about it," she explained for me. "Yeah," I mumbled, a little embarrassed, a little fiery and a little surprised that I was still so affected by a place I'd left two years prior.

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Who we are, who we've known, and where we've been matter. Our stories are important, because our stories shape us. They explain what's important to us and why. They become our "context clues" in the way we interact with live in the present day. And bigger and more significant than anything, our stories are important because we so believe that our story is just one piece of God's bigger story.

Our hope for this series comes in a few parts:

1. We hope for you and your small group to spend good time getting to know one another deeper and better. We truly believe deep, meaningful, hard conversation stems from deep, trust-filled relationships.
2. We hope that this is a time where you can model what it looks like to share your story. Maybe it will only take you 5 minutes, or maybe it will take 30. Your students want to know your story, will benefit from hearing, and will learn what it looks like to share their own from how you share.
3. We hope to practice being engaged with and actively listening to someone's story.
4. We hope that as we learn our stories and the stories of those in our small group's that we come to realize some important things: that we all have a story that's significant, and that our story is God's story. Because we all have a story, we are all Storytellers. We hope we can connect through our stories.

If you're looking for your one-liner, we're jumping into this series for this: **to know and be known.** →

## Some things to note about this series:

We're going to give you some materials to use, but use your small group time as you see best fit for getting to know one another in a deeper way. If that means you only touch on one question each night, that's fine! If you want to spend an entire night giving everyone a chance in the "hot seat" - awesome!

Maybe your group knows one another well and you'd like to take 4 weeks for everyone to prepare and share their testimonies. **We love that.** If you need extra resources to do so, just ask!

As we talked about stories, how to hear and tell them well, we came up with the 4 weeks of content. This is by no means the only way to go about it. We thought it was important to talk about: 1. What a story is, 2. How to listen well, and 3. That we all have a story to tell.

We think to know your group well is so vital. We absolutely think it paves the way to good conversation, that it models Jesus, but also it is just plain fun to get to know people!

And if your group has any new, awesome ideas, please share them! You can send any feedback to [ebostrom@blackhawkchurch.org](mailto:ebostrom@blackhawkchurch.org).

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## LARGE GROUP IDEAS

### VIDEOS:

- ◆ **Music Video for song "Storyteller":** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xID\\_t-BrqE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xID_t-BrqE)
- ◆ **Look up StoryCorps videos on Youtube. Share your favorite one!** (Note: some of these are the videos that were used for Fall Weekend)
- ◆ **Go to [iamsecond.com](http://iamsecond.com) and watch a sweet testimony or two.**

### ACTIVITIES:

- ◆ **Grab a few, different colored balls of yarn & a sheet of appropriate, get-to-know-you questions.** Arrange students and leaders in a circle(ish). Spread out the balls of yarn among different people. Start with **one color**. Whoever is holding that color yarn answers one question, then (while holding the end of the yarn) passes it to someone who hasn't had yarn. Go to the next color, and keep repeating until you have a colorful web and everyone has shared! *Ex. Person holding RED answers Q → throw → ORANGE answers Q → throw → YELLOW answers Q... And so on!*
- ◆ **Ask leaders or students to share their testimony with the group.** If that's too broad, try having a list of 5 questions that the leader/student will answer and do an interview. Try to give whoever's sharing ample time to prepare if possible!

## SMALL GROUP IDEAS

**Two Truths & A Lie:** One at a time have everyone share two truths and a lie about themselves. Have the rest of the people in the group guess which one they think is a lie.

**M&M Game:** Have everyone in the group grab as much or as little candy as they would like. Have each person answer questions depending on the colors they chose. Here is an example – hobbies (red), family (green), favorite movies/music (yellow), favorite vacation/place you would like to visit (orange), most memorable or embarrassing moment (brown), wild cards – can share anything you want (blue).

**Fear:** Distribute slips of paper and a writing utensil to each person in the group. Instruct people to anonymously write fears or worries that they have. After everyone is done writing, collect the slips of paper and shuffle the slips around. Have people pick up a slip of paper and read the fear out loud. Have each student/leader read a fear out loud, have a leader read the remaining fears.

**Joy:** Have everyone look for images that conjure up joy/great happiness using the Soularium cards/magazines. Go around the circle and have everyone share what images they found.

**Share a Verse:** Have each person spend some time sharing a verse that has been important in their life. If they'd like, have them share when that verse has been of comfort or encouragement to them.

**Bring a Picture:** Each person brings a candid picture from their childhood—one that tells a story! Take the time to share what you've been told by your parents, siblings or others about what was happening when this picture was taken.



## QUESTIONS

Use the questions provided, or make up your own! Take some time to connect at the beginning of each small group. Here are a few ways to use these questions:

- ◆ **Hot Seat:** One person at a time is asked as many questions as possible in a short amount of time (say 3 minutes or so). Make sure that in the few weeks each person gets a turn in the Hot Seat!
- ◆ **Bucket of Questions:** Cut out these questions or write your own and put them in a bucket. Go around your circle picking out one question each and answering it. This can be repeated a few times - try to set a time limit before beginning!
- ◆ **Dealer's Choice:** Have a favorite get to know you question? Ask the whole group to answer a few of your favorites!

- If you could re-read a book for the first time, what would it be?
- What is your favorite movie?
- What was your favorite childhood vacation?
- If you could have lunch with one person, dead or alive, who would it be?
- Would you rather scuba dive or sky dive?
- Describe yourself in three words.
- What is the best present you have ever received?
- What is your dream job?
- Are you a morning person or a night owl?
- Would you rather be hot or cold?
- Who is your celebrity crush?
- What is the last movie you saw in theaters?
- Which season is your favorite? Least favorite?
- What would you sing at a Karaoke night?
- What really makes you angry?
- What is your favorite book to read?
- Who makes you laugh the most?
- What was the last movie you went to?
- What did you want to be when you were a kid?
- If you could choose to do anything for a day, what would it be?
- Have you ever had a nickname? What is it?
- Do you like or dislike surprises? Why or why not?
- In the evening, would you rather play a game, visit a relative, watch a movie, or read?
- Would you rather vacation in Hawaii or Alaska, and why?
- Would you rather win the lottery or work at the perfect job? And why?
- If you were a super-hero, what powers would you have?
- What would you do if you won the lottery?

- What form of public transportation do you prefer? (air, boat, train, bus, etc.)
- What's your favorite zoo animal?
- If you could go back in time to change one thing, what would it be?
- If you could share a meal with any 4 individuals, living or dead, who would they be?
- How many pillows do you sleep with?
- What's the longest you've gone without sleep (and why)?
- What's the tallest building you've been to the top in?
- Would you rather trade intelligence for looks or looks for intelligence?
- How often do you buy clothes?
- Have you ever had a secret admirer?
- What's your favorite holiday?
- What's the most daring thing you've ever done?
- What was the last thing you recorded on TV?
- What was the last book you read?
- What's your favorite type of foreign food?
- Are you a clean or messy person?
- Who would you want to play you in a movie of your life?
- How long does it take you to get ready in the morning?
- What kitchen appliance do you use every day?
- What's your favorite fast food chain?
- What's your favorite family recipe?
- Do you love or hate rollercoasters?
- What's your favorite family tradition?
- What is your favorite childhood memory?
- What's your favorite movie?
- How old were you when you learned Santa wasn't real? How did you find out?
- Is your glass half full or half empty?
- What's the craziest thing you've done in the name of love?
- What three items would you take with you on a deserted island?
- What was your favorite subject in school?
- What's the most unusual thing you've ever eaten?
- Do you collect anything?
- Who would you want to be stranded with on a deserted island?
- If money was no object, what would you do all day?
- If you could go back in time, what year would you travel to?
- How would your friends describe you?
- What are your hobbies?
- What is the best gift you have been given?
- What is the worst gift you have received?
- Aside from necessities, what one thing could you not go a day without?
- List two pet peeves.
- Where do you see yourself in five years?
- How many pairs of shoes do you own?

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WEEK ONE

PURPOSE: Why do stories matter?

START:

- ◆ Take 5-15 minutes getting to know one another using the **QUESTIONS** page (Hot Seat, Bucket of Questions, Dealer's Choice, or something else!)
- ◆ Spend some time looking at the Student Booklet. Have students take a **look at Week One**.
- ◆ Ask someone (or more than one person—depending on length) to share a story from their day or week. Ask questions about their story from those who listened, like:
  - ◇ Why did \_\_\_\_ tell this story?
  - ◇ What does this story explain to us?
  - ◇ What were the important pieces of this story?
- ◆ What's your favorite story? Can be a Bible Story, a book, a movie, etc. What do you like about it?
- ◆ Why do we use stories?

*Stories matter because they help us explain the inexplicable. That's really the point of parables – Jesus explaining unexplainable things to his disciples. It's also why we try to share our own stories with others – to try to explain our own complex and unique lives. Let's look at two short stories that Jesus explains – and talk about how they explain the story of the Bible.*

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SCRIPTURE:

## Parable of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10)

1. What's the point of this story (what is Jesus trying to explain?) *Hint: v. 10*
2. Jesus is trying to show how much he cares and loves his people (us!). How can we do the same for those around us?
3. Why is this story important?
  - ◆ *It helps explain God's response to repentance. God will ALWAYS accept you... and he rejoices with angels when you decide to live your life for him (turn back!).*
  - ◆ *It also depicts God's love for us. The woman here (Jesus) goes and searches for her one lost coin. Will he not, similarly, go searching for us?*

## Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-9)

1. What's the point of this story? If your group is having trouble, read **Matthew 13:18-23**.
  2. Where are the seeds (message of the kingdom of God) being sown in your life? [path, rocky ground, thorns, or good soil]
- ◆ Why does Jesus explain things in parables?
    - ◇ Continue through **Matthew 13:10-13**. The disciples asked Jesus and he answered them!
  - ◆ Can we create a modern-day parable? (Try this as an activity if it excites you!)

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## WEEK TWO

**PURPOSE:** How do we engage with someone else's story?

**START:**

- ◆ Take 5-15 minutes getting to know one another using the **QUESTIONS** page (Hot Seat, Bucket of Questions, Dealer's Choice, or something else!)
- ◆ Take 10 minutes to complete the OCEAN personality test. **\*YOU MUST PRINT THIS OUT IF YOU WANT TO USE IT IN YOUR GROUP.** Go around and share the results and talk about some differences and similarities in your group. What did you learn about yourself? What did you learn about someone else in your group? How does knowing this information about people in your group help you understand them more?
- ◆ Spend some time looking at the Student Booklet. Have students take a look at **Week Two**.

**Share this quote before starting to talk through the passage or lesson:**

***"There isn't anyone you couldn't love if you knew their story."***

- ◆ What does this quote mean to you? Do you believe that this is true? What makes this statement true?
- ◆ Has there been someone in your life that you didn't love or truly understand until you heard their story or an aspect of who they are?
- ◆ Do you consider yourself a good listener? In your mind, what makes someone a good/ bad listener?

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**SCRIPTURE:**

*Jesus often taught through telling stories (parables), but also acts as the ultimate example of how someone should speak to, listen to and respond to someone.*

1. Have you ever thought your story is too messed up to tell anyone? Are you worried that people will misunderstand and judge you? Are you nervous that you'll misunderstand someone else's story and judge them?

Jesus knows our story, and yet responds in love. **Read the story of the Woman at the Well in John 4: 1-26.**

**Background Information:** *The time of day is crucial here. Those who originally heard this story would instantly note that noon is a strange time to fetch water. Women carried vessels full of water long distances, so they would go in the evening or in early morning because it was cooler. This woman was at the well in the middle of the day. Likely, she didn't want to be seen by the other women because she was ashamed. It was unacceptable for a woman to be married multiple times. She was living with someone who is not her husband - people would have labeled her an adulteress. Additionally, Samaritans were hated and looked down on by Jews, these two cultures would never interact and definitely not at a public well. Jesus' interaction with her is unthinkable in the context.*

- ◆ What might this story look like in today's culture?
- ◆ How did Jesus respond to this woman?
- ◆ How does this passage demonstrate good listening skills?
- ◆ How does this passage demonstrate good responding skills?
- ◆ What effect do you think this conversation and the way Jesus responds has on this woman?

Read **John 4:27-30**.

- ◆ Based on the background information from before, what is notable about the woman's response?

*She felt known by Jesus. The love and safety that comes with feeling known allowed her to leave the well and boldly tell others what had happened. She didn't care that they might judge her or would have seen her walking around town in the middle of the day.*

*The way that Jesus listened and responded gave her the opportunity to tell others what had happened and they believed in Jesus because of her faith and confidence.*

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- ◆ What would be different in your life if everyone knew your story and responded in love?
  - ◆ What would happen to other people if you listened to their story and responded like Jesus responded?
  - ◆ What is one thing you'd like everyone in the group to know about you?



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## WEEKS THREE/FOUR

PURPOSE: You have a story. What is it?

### START:

- ◆ **WEEK 3 & 4:** Take 5-15 minutes getting to know one another using the **QUESTIONS** page (Hot Seat, Bucket of Questions, Dealer's Choice, or something else!)
  - ◆ **WEEK 3:** Spend some time looking at the Student Booklet. Have students fill out **Week Three**. Give students some extra time to look over their booklets. During weeks 3 & 4, **we want to provide each student the chance to share about one significant person, place, or event.** Ask students to think about what they'd like to share. Make sure to adjust for time depending on how many students you have and how chatty they are! **We think it's so important that everyone has time to share this—so plan weeks 3 & 4 as needed.**
  - ◆ **WEEK 4:** Have students fill out **Week Four** if they haven't already. Take the time to let everyone share a significant person, place, or event.
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### SCRIPTURE:

Take a look at **Acts 26** to see how Paul tells his story. An easy version to read is the NLT, included on the back.

- ◆ What are some of the important pieces of Paul's story?
  - ◆ For what purpose does Paul share his story? (*Explanation? Persuasion? Etc.*)
  - ◆ What pieces of Paul's story had you heard before? What parts were new?
  - ◆ To Paul, his story is God's story. How did the Lord transform Paul's story and use it for good?
  - ◆ Read this commentary on Acts 26 from [blueletterbible.org](http://blueletterbible.org).
    - a. *Paul stands before the man whose great-grandfather had tried to kill Jesus as a baby; his grandfather had John the Baptist beheaded; his father had martyred the first apostle, James. This was a man whose family history made him unlikely to receive Paul warmly!*
    - b. *Paul is **happy** to speak before Agrippa. First, because he is pleased to have the evidence of his case examined closely by the highest officials, but also because he is pleased to preach the gospel to kings!*
  - ◆ How does having this context change how we read Paul's story? *Paul is on trial, and he is telling this to someone who likely already thinks he's guilty. BUT Paul boldly tells his story as God's story.*
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- ◆ What will you take away from this series on how to tell your story and listen to others?
- ◆ What would it look like to boldly proclaim your own story?
- ◆ What fears are holding you back from being vulnerable with those around you?

## Acts 26 New Living Translation (NLT)

Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You may speak in your defense."

So Paul, gesturing with his hand, started his defense: <sup>2</sup> "I am fortunate, King Agrippa, that you are the one hearing my defense today against all these accusations made by the Jewish leaders, <sup>3</sup> for I know you are an expert on all Jewish customs and controversies. Now please listen to me patiently!

<sup>4</sup> "As the Jewish leaders are well aware, I was given a thorough Jewish training from my earliest childhood among my own people and in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup> If they would admit it, they know that I have been a member of the Pharisees, the strictest sect of our religion. <sup>6</sup> Now I am on trial because of my hope in the fulfillment of God's promise made to our ancestors. <sup>7</sup> In fact, that is why the twelve tribes of Israel zealously worship God night and day, and they share the same hope I have. Yet, Your Majesty, they accuse me for having this hope! <sup>8</sup> Why does it seem incredible to any of you that God can raise the dead?

<sup>9</sup> "I used to believe that I ought to do everything I could to oppose the very name of Jesus the Nazarene. <sup>10</sup> Indeed, I did just that in Jerusalem. Authorized by the leading priests, I caused many believers there to be sent to prison. And I cast my vote against them when they were condemned to death. <sup>11</sup> Many times I had them punished in the synagogues to get them to curse Jesus. I was so violently opposed to them that I even chased them down in foreign cities.

<sup>12</sup> "One day I was on such a mission to Damascus, armed with the authority and commission of the leading priests. <sup>13</sup> About noon, Your Majesty, as I was on the road, a light from heaven brighter than the sun shone down on me and my companions. <sup>14</sup> We all fell down, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is useless for you to fight against my will.'

<sup>15</sup> "'Who are you, lord?' I asked.

"And the Lord replied, 'I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting. <sup>16</sup> Now get to your feet! For I have appeared to you to appoint you as my servant and witness. Tell people that you have seen me, and tell them what I will show you in the future. <sup>17</sup> And I will rescue you from both your own people and the Gentiles. Yes, I am sending you to the Gentiles <sup>18</sup> to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God's people, who are set apart by faith in me.'

<sup>19</sup> "And so, King Agrippa, I obeyed that vision from heaven. <sup>20</sup> I preached first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that all must repent of their sins and turn to God—and prove they have changed by the good things they do. <sup>21</sup> Some Jews arrested me in the Temple for preaching this, and they tried to kill me. <sup>22</sup> But God has protected me right up to this present time so I can testify to everyone, from the least to the greatest. I teach nothing except what the prophets and Moses said would happen— <sup>23</sup> that the Messiah would suffer and be the first to rise from the dead, and in this way announce God's light to Jews and Gentiles alike."

<sup>24</sup> Suddenly, Festus shouted, "Paul, you are insane. Too much study has made you crazy!"

<sup>25</sup> But Paul replied, "I am not insane, Most Excellent Festus. What I am saying is the sober truth. <sup>26</sup> And King Agrippa knows about these things. I speak boldly, for I am sure these events are all familiar to him, for they were not done in a corner! <sup>27</sup> King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do—"

<sup>28</sup> Agrippa interrupted him. "Do you think you can persuade me to become a Christian so quickly?"<sup>□</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Paul replied, "Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that both you and everyone here in this audience might become the same as I am, except for these chains."

<sup>30</sup> Then the king, the governor, Bernice, and all the others stood and left. <sup>31</sup> As they went out, they talked it over and agreed, "This man hasn't done anything to deserve death or imprisonment."