

Storyteller

CHOOSE GROWTH

Matt VanCleave
October 25, 2020

GROUP ICE BREAKER

Would you rather have a fast forward, pause or rewind button on your life? Why?

BECOMING A STORYTELLER

Give time for someone in the group to share their story using the Becoming A Storyteller Guide.

REVIEW LAST WEEK'S NEXT STEPS

What, if any, next step did you commit to last week, how did it go?

- I will read "Better Decisions, Fewer Regrets" by Andy Stanley.
- I will make parenting a priority, and not abdicate my responsibility.
- I will do battle with the sin in my life.
- I will call someone and say, "I love you."
- I will take a risk and open up in a relationship.

THIS WEEK'S SERMON RECAP

In Matthew 13, Jesus tells a story about a sower who scattered seed on various kinds of soil. It's a story about growth, which is God's intention for all human beings. When anything is alive and healthy, it grows. The story has three elements, the seed, the sower, and the soil. The seed, the word of God, doesn't change. The sower also doesn't change, and the sower is generous with his seed. The soil is what changes, and it represents you and me. Whether or not the seed takes root and thrives depends upon the soil. The first soil is hard soil, soil that needs to be softened and broken up. Breaking up hard ground hurts, but it's worth it. The second soil is shallow soil. We live in a shallow world, if you have shallow roots of faith, they will not sustain life. The third soil is cluttered. A mind can get cluttered with the worries of life, and it'll lead to failure to thrive. Hard hearts, shallow faith, cluttered lives- these choke the spiritual vitality right out of us. And sometimes, there is non-responsive soil. Soil that will look good for a little bit and then disappear. You'll be tempted to give up, but don't, because the harvest is coming. Your job is to sow the seed, be like the sower. Just sow the seed, lavishly and generously. Your job is not to make the growth happen, that's His job.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In the story, Jesus discusses different types of soil representing different conditions of the heart. The first seed fell onto hard ground and was eaten by birds. What condition of the heart is represented by this seed, and what makes it difficult in this condition to walk with Christ?

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONT)

2. The second kind of seed fell on rocky ground where it sprouted right away but had no root. What are the characteristics of this kind of faith? Why is our faith foundation so important to our spiritual life?
3. When's the last time you had a deep conversation, and/or an unhurried time of prayer to just share the fullness of your heart, happy or sad, with God?
4. The third seed was sown in weed infested soil. What is cluttering up your life and keeping you from the full vibrant spiritual life God has intended for you?
5. The fourth seed falls on good soil where it grows exponentially, if our hearts are soft and open to God's truth and action. Share about someone that demonstrates this kind of relationship with God, and how it has impacted your life.
6. What areas in your life, or who do you interact with, that are ripe for seed sowing? How can we remain encouraged while ministering to others?
7. Pastor Matt says, God wants you to love someone tomorrow that you couldn't love yesterday, to find sin is less appealing, to be able to share your faith with greater boldness and effectiveness, to pray more deeply, speak more honestly, rejoice more passionately, and forgive more freely. Which areas are you doing well in and which are challenges for you? What is something you can do this week to grow in one area?

NEXT STEPS FOR THIS WEEK (COMMIT TO GROW)

Use these as a guide to take your next step and commit to what you learned this week:

- I will pray, "I need you God. I want your Word to take root in my life."
- I will pray, "God, soften my heart so that I'm tenderhearted toward you."
- I will take a deep unhurried time alone with God to share my heart this week.
- I will take responsibility for the development of my spiritual life.
- I will take responsibility for the spiritual practices that keep me rooted in Christ.
- I will remove the clutter in my life to make room for growth.
- I will be faithful in sowing seed, realizing it will land on good soil 1/4 of the time.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

- Matthew 13:1-13
- Matthew 13:18-23

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BECOMING A STORYTELLER

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“Stories are the creative conversation of life into a more powerful, clearer, more meaningful experience. They are the currency of human contact.” Robert McKee

Stories move us. They inspire us. Stories are a way to touch the heart and inspire greater understanding about life. Life with God. Life with each other. There’s power in our story. Stories create connection, and that’s why we want everyone to have an opportunity to tell their story.

Being in community with others is really getting to know them, which usually entails knowing their story and them knowing yours. The idea of telling your personal story to others may make you a little uncomfortable, but it doesn’t have to be a big production nor comprehensive. It’s simply to give the others in your group a sense of what makes you uniquely you and what God has done in your spiritual journey.

WHAT PARTS OF YOUR STORY TO TELL

When you think of your story, it’s probably centered around people, places and events. Those three categories capture how we interact with the world around us.

One way to organize your thoughts is to use the space provided on the reverse side to identify people who have played significant roles in your life, places that are special to you, and events that have affected you. It’s really as simple as that.

You probably can’t talk about all the people, places and events you write down as your story should only be five to ten minutes max, but this will give you a place to start. From here, you can think through the parts of your story that are the most important to emphasize. It’s your story and you are free to share what you want to share.

Above all, remember this. You may think the other members of your group aren’t interested in your story, but that’s not true. Most of us are curious about the people around us, and we’re predisposed to empathize and connect with others. Your story will help draw the other members of your group closer. You’ll also be amazed at how many people will relate to parts of your story.

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KEY PEOPLE

KEY PLACES

KEY EVENTS

(Events can be turning points, something that took you from one chapter to the next, or plot twists, something that moved your story in a completely unexpected direction.)

You can keep this paper with you when sharing your story. The point isn't to be a perfect public speaker. The point is for your group to get to know each other and create or deepen authentic community. Our stories give background and context to our conversations each week and will enhance our time together. So as difficult as sharing your story may be, it's worth it! It'll give us a deeper understanding of each other as we all journey through this part of our stories together. And that's a good thing.