



# Small Group Leaders Notes

Theme Teaching  
Week 6 Storytelling

Last update 07.09.2018

## WELCOME



- ▶ Welcome people.
- ▶ Today we have our third and final session on Jesus' emphasis on 'Teaching'.
- ▶ Look back briefly to the previous week. What have people remembered from our focus on 'Unlearning'?
- ▶ Lead in a time of prayer for this meeting to be a spiritual adventure as we seek to learn more from Jesus' teaching ministry.

## STARTER



Today we are thinking about Jesus the Storyteller. 'Break the ice' by asking:

- ▶ **What is the best fiction book or short story that you have ever read? Or if you're not into reading, what is the best film you have seen, or TV series you have watched?**

Give everyone time to contribute. Then think together about why we liked those particular books or films and what we learned from them.

Ask the group to bring to mind any stories that Jesus told; ask them to particularly mention a story which has had a great impact on their faith.

## BIBLE



Before you read the passage, point out that Jesus was a master communicator. He didn't only have a clear message but he communicated his message very well. He was down to earth, used examples from daily life, and told many stories. These are the 'parables', stories with a hidden message. Some people have described a parable as 'an earthly story with a heavenly meaning'. By telling stories he connected with ordinary people and got his message across.

- ▶ **Why do you think Jesus used stories or parables so often?**
- ▶ **What advantages do they have over 'straight forward teaching'?**

### Reading: Mark 4.1-9

Read the Bible passage, maybe with each group member reading a couple of verses. Imagine this scene together. Explore the following questions together:

- ▶ **What is the key message Jesus brings in the parable of the sower?**

Slowly read vs 3-8 again and ask the group to listen out for the four kinds of soil mentioned in the story (path, rocky ground, thorns and good soil) and to relate that to their own lives.

- ▶ **What kind of soil do you think you are at this point in your life?**
- ▶ **How can we help each other to become or remain good soil?**

## FOCUS



- ▶ There are more than fifty parables in Matthew, Mark and Luke. Jesus used stories to connect with ordinary people, such as farmers and fishermen, as he travelled around and proclaimed the good news of the Kingdom.
- ▶ The word 'parable' comes from the Greek and Latin and means 'comparison' or 'illustration'. It is 'a way of saying' something important. Rather than just stating the truth, Jesus draws people in by telling stories and thus invites them to explore the truth for themselves.

### Reading: Mark 4.10–12

Acknowledge that these are difficult verses to understand. They help us to recognise that 'those on the inside' see things differently from 'those on the outside'.

- ▶ In what sense is the Kingdom of God a 'secret' (or treasure) that has been given to us?
- ▶ When did 'the penny drop' for you? Is this a helpful way of expressing it?

### Reading: Mark 4.13–20

In the previous verses Jesus acknowledged that it might be hard to understand the parables, especially if you don't know 'the secret' or 'the mystery' of the Kingdom. But here he gives a more detailed explanation of the story. Jesus applies the 4 kinds of soil (path, rocky ground, thorns and good soil) to the way we respond to God's word.

- ▶ What are 4 different ways of responding to God's word?
- ▶ What are the things in our lives that restrict our response to God's word?
- ▶ How can we help other people to respond to God's word?

## ACTIVITY



This is an activity that requires some preparation. The aim is that the group grasp the importance of stories. One of the reasons people respond well to stories is because our human life is a story. Bring to the group a real human life story, maybe of a well known person, like Nelson Mandela or someone less well known. You could bring in a biography or some photographs. Highlight various crucial moments in that person's life.

Ask the group to think of one or two important moments/events in their own life. Invite them to share this. Conclude by saying that Jesus connected deeply with real people, who have fascinating life stories and he wants to do the same today.

## APPLY



1. What can we learn from Jesus about the benefit of storytelling?
2. How might we add more storytelling in our church worship?
3. What kind of stories could we include?
4. How can we share our faith stories more with our neighbours and friends?

## PRAYER



Divide the prayer time in three parts:

1. Ask everyone to bring their own life story to God in silence. You can introduce it by saying with short silences in between: We thank God for our lives... We rejoice in all the good things we have experienced in our lives... We bring to God the difficulties we have had... We look forward to what God still has in store for each one of us...
2. Pray for a richer use of stories in our church life and worship, and for the sharing of faith stories with our neighbours and friends.
3. Pray the JSP prayer together (make sure you print this out beforehand. For convenience it has been printed on the next page of these notes.)

▶ The imagery of the farmer sowing seed and hoping for a good harvest is not just a familiar illustration from everyday farming life, but it points to God who wants his word to grow in people's lives and to bear fruit.

▶ The passage alludes to the fact that some people respond to God's word and others don't. This is a mystery.

▶ This is one of the few parables which is related in Mark, Matthew and Luke and where Jesus gives an explanation.



## The JSP Vision Prayer

*Last update 31.08.2018*

O risen Lord Jesus  
Whose wounds declare the suffering  
and the victory of God:  
We thank you for bursting the bonds of death.  
Look at us now,  
Look at our bonds;  
Look at the things which tie us down;  
Which fasten our hands and hobble our feet:  
Which stop us from walking in your ways;  
Which stop us from doing your works;  
Which tether us so tightly to the weight of past failure.

And as you have burst the bonds of death,  
so burst these bonds and set us free.  
Set us free from our pride;  
Set us free from our sin;  
Set us free from our fear;  
Set us free from ourselves.  
Stand in our midst, and in our hearts let us behold you.  
Lay your hands upon us;

Breathe into us your breath;  
Speak to us,  
and may your speech  
be written into the beating of our hearts;  
Speak to us and may your speech  
be carried in the motions of our mind.  
So may the fire of your love fall upon us,  
that we may be changed from within;  
discovering faith that can move  
the mountains of irrelevance in our churches;  
and have that love without which faith is vain.  
So give us speech that each person  
may hear us speak in his own tongue;  
So give us life that we may fashion anew  
in this generation that army of disciples  
that can win the world for you.

Look at us Lord,  
and may this Body which you have bought  
by your death now be occupied by your resurrection,  
filled with your Spirit, and shaped into your likeness.  
For our peace  
– for this needy world –  
and for the establishing of your glorious Kingdom.  
Amen