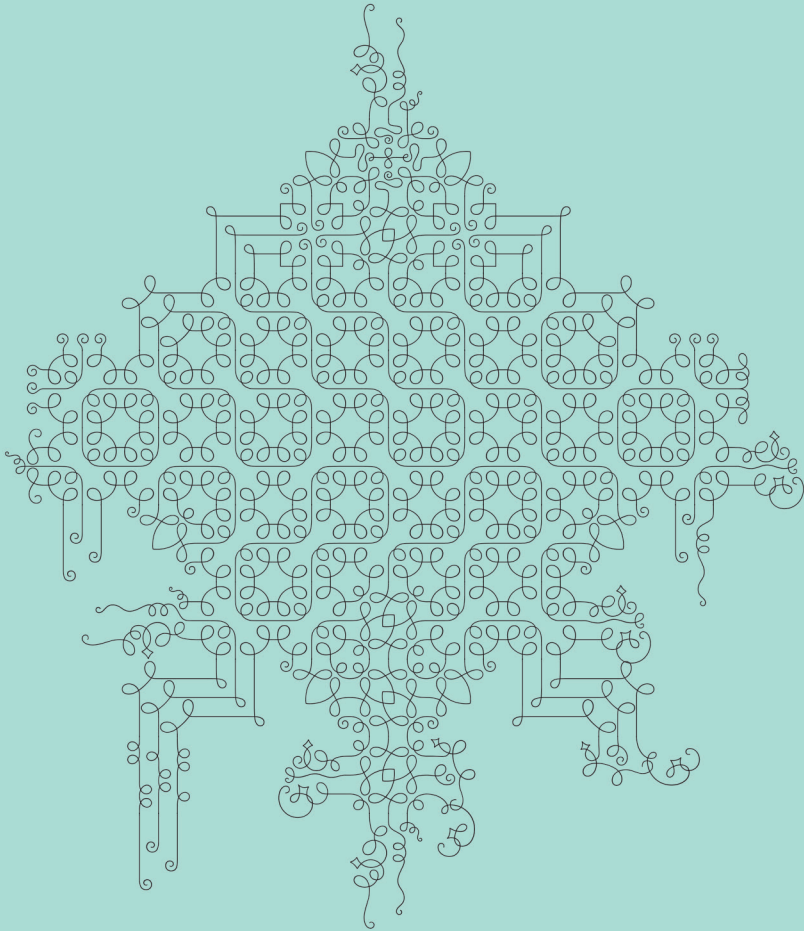


DIALOG

The Story of God

EXPLORING THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE



Facilitator's Guide

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TELLING THE STORY OF GOD

Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience

Focus Scriptures: Luke 24:13-35

Session Goal: To help group members understand what the story of God is and the importance of understanding its message.

OPENING OUR MINDS

Option 1

Invite your adults to think of the first word that comes to mind when they hear the word “Bible.” Write these on a dry erase board. Then share the following definition from the Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition: *The sacred scriptures of Christians comprising the Old Testament and the New Testament.* A secondary definition: *A publication that is preeminent especially in authoritativeness or wide readership.*

- **Is the Bible more than a sacred book? Why or why not?**

Share with the group that:

1. The Bible is the Spirit-inspired written record revealing one message of who God is and how He wants to relate to people in ways that will bring salvation and peace to them.
2. The Bible is “salvation history.”
3. The Bible is the Spirit-inspired written revelation of God, who lovingly calls us to respond to His love by faith that leads to salvation and eternal life.

Option 2

Go around the room and ask your group to complete this sentence: *If there were no Bible, then . . .* Follow up by asking,

- **What difference would it make to people and society in general if there were no Bible?**
- **Considering the Bible is thousands of years old, why should we study the Bible today? How is its message still relevant today?**

OPENING THE WORD

Understanding Luke 24:13-35

On the first Sunday of the resurrection two of Jesus' followers were traveling from Jerusalem to the village of Emmaus. These two travelers were discussing what had just happened (24:14). They were trying to make some sense of Jesus' betrayal, arrest, suffering, and crucifixion. They were confused and most likely experiencing a flood of emotions. Then, "Jesus himself came near and went with them" (v. 15.), but they were kept from recognizing Him. After hearing their story, He "interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures . . . beginning with Moses and all the prophets" (v. 27). They invite the "stranger" to eat with them and talk further. During the meal their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus. At that moment he disappears. They immediately return to Jerusalem and tell the Eleven of their encounter with the risen Savior.

Luke is more detailed about this encounter than Mark's account (16:12-13). It is clear that these two people, although followers, did not know the scripture and were slow to believe. This is why Jesus explains how His life, death, and resurrection was prophesied in Scripture and had in fact been fulfilled. Jesus, through the Spirit, continues to open the Scriptures to us and whose resurrection presence still set hearts on fire.

Option 1

Begin by asking your group to close their eyes and imagine that they are followers of Jesus and they have just witnessed His crucifixion and death. Ask your group to silently consider what they might be thinking and how they might be feeling.

Read Luke 24:13-35.

- **How do you think Jesus' followers felt after His death?**
- **Do you think they fully understood all that had happened? Why or why not?**
- **Why do you think they did not recognize Jesus?**
- **According to verses 19-24, how did they interpret Jesus' death and all that had occurred?**
- **How did Jesus respond? Why do you think He used the truth of Scripture to address their unbelief and hopelessness?**
- **Why do you think they asked Jesus to eat with them?**
- **After recognizing it was Jesus, in what ways did their encounter with Him effect their lives?**

Option 2

Divide everyone into groups of three. Ask each group to read Luke 24:13-35 and discuss what stands out to them from this story. After sufficient time, invite each group to share their discussion. Then ask,

- **How do you think the followers were feeling at the beginning of the story?**
- **Why did Jesus use Scripture to address their unbelief and confusion?**
- **How do you think the followers were feeling at the end of the story?**
- **If you were to paraphrase this story for someone who had never heard it before, what would you say? How do you explain its message for us today?**

Imaginative Option

Read Luke 24:13-35 dramatically. Ask for a volunteer to be the narrator. Then, ask for volunteers to portray each of the followers and Jesus. As the narrator reads the story, the volunteers act out the story. Follow up by asking the questions from *Option 1*.

OPENING OUR HEARTS

Share with the group that Jesus used Scripture to open the eyes of His followers to the truth of who He is. God gave us the Bible to provide us with the illumination and instruction we need, not only to live here on earth, but to inherit eternal life through Jesus Christ. It is the supreme authority in matters of faith and conduct.

During the time of John Wesley (1703-1791), it was typical for theologians to acknowledge the importance of church *tradition* and human *reason* to help us to read the *Scriptures* rightly. Wesley certainly agreed with this, but he also cleared a significant place for spiritual *experience*. These four elements have become known as “the Wesleyan quadrilateral.” Today’s story of the resurrected Jesus and His followers helps to make the point that these elements of *Scripture*, *tradition*, *reason*, and *experience* are deeply intertwined. When it comes to the message of the Bible, these elements used together can help us better understand God’s Word.

- **Scripture** is the *primary* source for Christian doctrine. This asks, “What does God’s Word say?”
- **Tradition** is seeing how faith through the past centuries has grown and developed. This asks, “How did past Christians, theologians, and Bible scholars interpret this passage?”
- **Experience** is understanding faith in the light of his or her own life. This asks, “How do past experiences help me understand this passage?”
- **Reason** helps understand faith through discerning and rational thought. This asks, “In what ways can I understand this passage logically?”

Ask,

- **How is *Scripture*, *tradition*, *reason*, and *experience* part of today’s story?**
- **In what ways would you use *Scripture*, *tradition*, *reason*, and *experience* to understand today’s story? How would you employ these in your Bible reading?**

- **Why is it important to read and understand the message of God's Word? Why is it important to share the message of God's Word with others?**

Close by writing the following acrostic on a dry erase board and discuss its meaning.

Worship and Bible reading go together.

Evaluate difficult scripture by plainer scripture.

Study with other Christians.

Living Word, not just written Word.

Experiences are understood in light of Scripture.

Yes to what God asks us to do.

Apply Scripture to life—always.

No limits on what grace can do in us.

Connect

WEEK 1

Telling the Story of God: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience

THIS WEEK: We will examine the ways to read and understand God's Word.

THINK ABOUT THIS: In what ways does God speak to you through His Word?

PRAYER CONCERNS:

The Story of God

EXPLORING THE BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

Topics in this 7-week study include:

Session 1: Telling the Story of God: *Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience*

Session 2: The God Who Creates: *And the Creation God Invites Us to Be*

Session 3: The Tragedy of God's Story: *The Doctrine of Sin*

Session 4: The People of Israel in God's Story: *The Doctrine of Covenants*

Session 5: A New Twist in God's Story: *The Doctrine of Christ*

Session 6: Living in God's Story: *The Doctrine of the Church*

Session 7: The End of God's Story: *The Doctrine of Last Things*

The DIALOG SERIES offers topical and biblical small group studies that generate meaningful conversation. Each 7-week study explores a subject significant to the Church and to the story of God. Dialog creates community. So let's talk.

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