

# 10 Stories of



# STORIES OF HOPE

Like many others, you may have a spiritual hunger and curiosity to not only know God but allow Him to transform your life. You may even have an interest in sharing this with others. We have seen hundreds of people's lives transformed through this simple process that we are sharing with you. We would like to provide you with a simple tool called a **Discovery Group** to help you and others around you experience hope.

You can do this anywhere—at home, restaurant, jail cell, or a park. Please let us know about your experience in starting a group. Contact us with your questions.

Phil Alessi      philalessi@gmail.com

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## **Learning to facilitate a Group Discovery**

1. Ask the CONNECT questions
2. Get people to read the passage, let them decide how. The best is for everyone to be involved in the reading.
3. Ask someone in the group to restate the passage in his/her own words. Choose this person randomly and do not forewarn. This way, everyone will concentrate on the passage because they may be chosen to give the summary.
4. Ask the others to add anything important that this person left out, or to add any other thoughts about the passage.
5. Ask the DISCOVERY questions: work through each verse or paragraph in the passage and ask people what it says and what it means. Keep coming back to the passage – do not allow them to drift off. Should they drift off, bring them back with questions like: "Where does it say that in this passage?"
6. Give people a few minutes (3 minutes is good) to consider how they will obey this passage. Then have everyone share their obedience ("I will") statement.
7. Ask the APPLY AND PERSON questions

# STORIES OF HOPE

## CONNECT

How did God show up in your life this week? Were there any lessons you applied or shared? What are you thankful for? What is causing stress in your life right now?

## DISCOVER

**MARK 2:1-17**

**A Party at Levi's**

**SCRIPTURE** Read the passage. What does the passage say? (repeat it in your own words)

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**OWN WORDS** What do you think the passage means? What do you learn about God? What do you learn about people?

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**APPLY** (If this is God speaking to you...) What will you do about it? How can we show kindness to one another? Who else can we show kindness to?

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**PERSON** Who can we tell and how will we tell what we are learning?

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# STORIES OF HOPE

## MARK 2:1-17

## A Party at Levi's

### Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man

**2:1** A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. **2** They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. **3** Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. **4** Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. **5** When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

**6** Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, **7** "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

**8** Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? **9** Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? **10** But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man, **11** "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." **12** He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!" **13** Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. **14** As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

**15** While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. **16** When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

**17** On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

# STORIES OF HOPE

## CONNECT

How did God show up in your life this week? Were there any lessons you applied or shared? What are you thankful for? What is causing stress in your life right now?

## DISCOVER

**John 3:1-17**

**Nic at Night**

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# STORIES OF HOPE

## Jesus Teaches Nicodemus John 3:1-17

3:1 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him."

3 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again."

4 "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!"

5 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."

9 "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked.

10 "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? 11 Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. 12 I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? 13 No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. 14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, 15 that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

# STORIES OF HOPE

## CONNECT

How did God show up in your life this week? Were there any lessons you applied or shared? What are you thankful for? What is causing stress in your life right now?

## DISCOVER

**MARK 5:1-20**

## A Transformed Life

**SCRIPTURE** Read the passage. What does the passage say? (repeat it in your own words)

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**OWN WORDS** What do you think the passage means? What do you learn about God? What do you learn about people?

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# STORIES OF HOPE

## MARK 5:1-20      A Transformed Life

5:1 They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. **2** When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. **3** This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. **4** For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. **5** Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

**6** When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. **7** He shouted at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God's name don't torture me!" **8** For Jesus had said to him, "Come out of this man, you impure spirit!"

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

"My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." **10** And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

**11** A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. **12** The demons begged Jesus, "Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them." **13** He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

**14** Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. **15** When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. **16** Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well.

**17** Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

**18** As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. **19** Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." **20** So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.



# STORIES OF HOPE

## CONNECT

How did God show up in your life this week? Were there any lessons you applied or shared? What are you thankful for? What is causing stress in your life right now?

## DISCOVER **Luke 7:37-50** A Memorable Act

**SCRIPTURE** Read the passage. What does the passage say? (repeat it in your own words)

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# STORIES OF HOPE

## LUKE 7:37-50

### A Memorable Act

**7:37** A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. **38** As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

**39** When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

**40** Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Tell me, teacher," he said.

**41** "Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. **42** Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

**43** Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

**44** Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. **45** You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from t

he time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. **46** You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. **47** Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little."

**48** Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

**49** The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" **50** Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

# STORIES OF HOPE

## CONNECT

How did God show up in your life this week? Were there any lessons you applied or shared? What are you thankful for? What is causing stress in your life right now?

## DISCOVER      LUKE 15:11-32      The Lost Son Returns

**SCRIPTURE** Read the passage. What does the passage say? (repeat it in your own words)

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**OWN WORDS** What do you think the passage means? What do you learn about God? What do you learn about people?

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# STORIES OF HOPE

## LUKE 15:11-32 The Lost Son Returns

**15: 11** Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. **12** The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

**13** "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. **14** After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. **15** So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. **16** He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

**17** "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! **18** I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' **20** So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

**21** "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

**22** "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. **23** Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. **24** For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate.

**25** "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. **26** So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. **27** 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

**28** "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. **29** But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. **30** But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!'

**31** "'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. **32** But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"

# STORIES OF HOPE

How did God show up in your life this week? Were there any lessons you applied or shared? What are you thankful for? What is causing stress in your life right now?

## **DISCOVER**      **LUKE 17:11-19**      **The Lost Son Returns**

**SCRIPTURE** Read the passage. What does the passage say? (repeat it in your own words)

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## STORIES OF HOPE

### LUKE 17:11-19      Thanks!

**17:11** Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. **12** As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance **13** and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

**14** When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed.

**15** One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. **16** He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.

**17** Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? **18** Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?" **19** Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."

# STORIES OF HOPE

## CONNECT

How did God show up in your life this week? Were there any lessons you applied or shared? What are you thankful for? What is causing stress in your life right now?

## DISCOVER      LUKE 18: 9-14    What God Sees

**SCRIPTURE** Read the passage. What does the passage say? (repeat it in your own words)

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# STORIES OF HOPE

## Luke 18:9-14 What God Sees

**18: 9** To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: **10** “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. **11** The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. **12** I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

**13** “But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

**14** “I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”



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## CONNECT

How did God show up in your life this week? Were there any lessons you applied or shared? What are you thankful for? What is causing stress in your life right now?

## DISCOVER

**LUKE 19: 1-10**

**Coming to Your House**

**SCRIPTURE** Read the passage. What does the passage say? (repeat it in your own words)

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## STORIES OF HOPE

### LUKE 19:1-10    **Coming to your house**

**19:1** Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. **2** A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. **3** He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. **4** So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

**5** When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." **6** So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

**7** All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner."

**8** But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

**9** Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. **10** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

# STORIES OF HOPE

## CONNECT

How did God show up in your life this week? Were there any lessons you applied or shared? What are you thankful for? What is causing stress in your life right now?

## DISCOVER **John 4 Hungry for God**

**SCRIPTURE** Read the passage. What does the passage say? (repeat it in your own words)

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# STORIES OF HOPE

## JOHN 4 Hungry for God

**4:1** Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— **2** although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. **3** So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

**4** Now he had to go through Samaria. **5** So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. **6** Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

**7** When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?"

**8** (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

**9** The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

**10** Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

**11** "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? **12** Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?"

**13** Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, **14** but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

**15** The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

**16** He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

**17** "I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. **18** The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

**19** "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. **20** Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

**21** "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. **22** You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. **23** Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they

## STORIES OF HOPE

are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. **24** God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

**25** The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

**26** Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

**27** Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

**28** Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, **29** "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?" **30** They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

**31** Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something."

**32** But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

**33** Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

**34** "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. **35** Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. **36** Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. **37** Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. **38** I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

**39** Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." **40** So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. **41** And because of his words many more became believers.

**42** They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

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## Connect

How did God show up in your life this week? Were there any lessons you applied or shared? What are you thankful for? What is causing stress in your life right now?

## DISCOVER      MARK 4:1-20

**SCRIPTURE** Read the passage. What does the passage say? (repeat it in your own words)

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## MARK 4:1-20

4:1 Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. <sup>2</sup> He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: <sup>3</sup> "Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. <sup>4</sup> As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. <sup>5</sup> Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. <sup>6</sup> But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. <sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. <sup>8</sup> Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times."<sup>9</sup> Then Jesus said, "Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear."<sup>10</sup> When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. <sup>11</sup> He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables <sup>12</sup> so that,

"they may be ever seeing but never perceiving,  
and ever hearing but never understanding;  
otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!"

<sup>13</sup> Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? <sup>14</sup> The farmer sows the word. <sup>15</sup> Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. <sup>16</sup> Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. <sup>17</sup> But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. <sup>18</sup> Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; <sup>19</sup> but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. <sup>20</sup> Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown."