

Neighborhood Groups Storytelling Guide

Email sent to your leader this week from Kathleen:

The first movie I ever saw in a theatre was the original version of “True Grit”. In fact, I went back five times that summer to see it using my babysitting money to purchase the tickets. Once in a theatre, I was hooked. As anyone who knows me knows I’m a movie buff and I love deep character development. I’m not your shoot ‘em up kind of girl nor a romantic. I want a good storyline.

John Wayne, Kim Darby, and Glenn Campbell! What a crush I had on Glenn that summer!

If you don’t know the story, it’s a pretty simple western. Girl with grit looks for bad guy who killed her dad. Girl asks other guys who also have grit to help her find the bad guy and bring him to justice. The three travel through unforgiving territory by horse and have some setbacks. They find the bad guy and girl almost dies in the process.

Like I said. It’s a pretty simple story.

But the character development is oh so sweet! At first, the three are pretty harsh to each other but as their story unfolds, we see their strengths and struggles. As their story unfolds, a bond forms between them. We see empathy, truthfulness and even a love that grows deep in the midst of discovering each other’s pain. As each finds their way, there is a reliance upon the other that is life-giving.

For years, I’ve held this movie in my head not really understanding why a story would stick with me for more than 40 years. But as story has become an important way for me to see change in the world, I see that girl as a picture of myself. She was the eldest in a large family, over-responsible and headstrong in many ways. But just as she was softened by her own story and enmeshed with the stories of others, I too have been softened by those around me as I have better understood their stories and in turn, mine.

Jean Luc Godard, a French filmmaker, whose political leanings created quite an uproar in the ‘60s, used story to stir the pot. But he said something rather profound that I identify with. “Sometimes reality is too complex. Stories give it form.”

Sometimes our stories are whimsical. Sometimes they are downright brutal. But it is our stories that literally change the world. And it is world changers who tell stories. It’s the most powerful way to put ideas in the world that stick to our hearts and spring us into action.

Jesus did this. He was the best of storytellers. He said, “I will use stories to speak my message and to explain things that have been hidden since the creation of the world.” (Matthew 13:35)

And his stories did change the world forever.

You and your group have three opportunities to be part of this idea of storytelling this week:

1. ***Be inspired.*** Come to the Neighborhood Group Story Event tonight, May 31st at 7:00 pm and hear the stories of our people.
2. ***Be storytellers.*** Use story for your meetings in the next few weeks. We are providing story prompts below for your group to help them to tell stories. Depending on your group size, this activity could be for one or two weeks (This will replace the sermon-based study guide for June).
3. ***Be engaged.*** The movie series is the perfect way to engage your group in storytelling. Pick one of the selected features for the series or one of your favorites to watch together.

We are people who need real-life stories, messages of assurance, so we recognize that no matter what is happening in our lives or how uncertain things may seem at the moment, God is with us and so are those who have an ear to hear them.

Activity

Dear Group:

We will be spending some time telling stories in our groups as a continuation of our story night event on Friday, May 31st and as Gospel-centered stories will be told throughout June each weekend based on some significant movies in our culture right now.

As we know, stories are powerful ways in which we can tell the tale of our own lives and possibly help guide others through the lessons we have learned from them.

Your leader will send you this document before your meeting. Your job is to pick one of the story prompts and frame a story around it. If you think of a story prompt that isn't here, go with that.

What is the purpose of this activity?

We tell a little bit about ourselves each week at our groups and the understanding that we take away from each other about our story builds each week.

But some stories don't get told because they are not "prompted". So here is the opportunity to frame a story about yourself.

- Give yourself a bit of time before your next meeting to pick a prompt and develop a story around it. It is not enough to say your favorite childhood toy was a red ball and call it a night. Think about a story around the prompt you pick.
- The story should be told in no more than five minutes in length unless you are on a roll!
- The ending doesn't need a spiritual context, be neatly tied in a bow nor anything heavy. Let the story stand on it's own. This is just a chance for your group to know a little more about you.
- No need to let the group know what you picked beforehand or if others picked the same prompt.
- Have lots of fun with it!

Pick A Story Prompt:

- You let go of something you treasured.
- A story about how you got into the line of work you do/did.
- A memory from childhood that seems extraordinary.
- A story from your childhood that you wish you had made a different choice.
- A funny but embarrassing moment from middle school.
- A favorite childhood toy.
- Talk about a person in your life you consider a hero.
- A character from a book you'd love to meet and why.
- If you could do something you have never done before, what would it be and why?
- Tell a story about learning something: riding a bike, climbing a tree, skating down the street?
- Did you ever win or lose a contest? What happened?
- Did your mom or dad ever make you wear something you hated?
- Talk about a disastrous vacation or trip.
- What game do you play as a kid?
- Did you ever meet a famous person?
- What was the funniest thing that ever happened to you?
- Describe what gives you the most comfort.
- The most beautiful thing you have ever seen.

- What's the hardest truth you have ever learned?
- What's the greatest lesson you ever learned?
- If you could invent something that would make your life easier, what would it be?
- What's the best day of the year? Why?
- The most fun I've ever had....
- My favorite weekend ritual...
- Things I always did with my dad/mom when I was small...
- Did you ever get lost?
- As a child, who was your favorite relative?
- Who was your first crush?
- Your first job? Your first apartment?
- Your father's favorite singer? Movie? Baseball player? Pipe tobacco?
- Your mother's favorite recipe? Was it yours? Do you still make it?
- What was your childhood dream? Do you ever get close to doing it? Why? Why not?
- What book would you like to write?