

# STORIES JESUS TOLD

A STUDY OF THE PARABLES OF JESUS



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### GUIDES TO GROUP DISCUSSIONS

From childhood fables to the books on your coffee table, stories impact how we see the world. The parables of Jesus are the world's most influential stories—even people who've never read the Bible know phrases like “a good Samaritan” or “a prodigal.” But these parables aren't just fascinating stories—they're life-changing truths that challenge how we see God, His Kingdom, and our lives. Join us for our new teaching series and hear the *Stories Jesus Told*.

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#### SOME THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

Remember that you aren't in this alone! God will help you prepare and lead your group discussion. Make it your goal to keep in step with the Holy Spirit!

Pray and read the passage a few times on your own. Take a few minutes to identify what makes an impression on you and how the passage might impact your group.

Once you've taken some time to read the passage on your own, read through the entire Discussion Guide. Make sure you understand the Main Point. Identify which questions you want to use in your group time and rewrite them in your own words.

Once your group time is over, take a few minutes to evaluate the discussion. What went well? What could have been different? If you had a “bad night,” DON'T GIVE UP! Everyone has tough nights. There were times when even the disciples didn't get what Jesus was talking about!

To equip you as a leader, we provide resources each series to help you and members of your group understand and respond to the biblical truths we're studying as a church. Don't forget about the Mariners Annual Read and the [Gospel Every Day podcast](#) discussing each devotional.

The CSB Study Bible is an excellent resource if you'd prefer a physical copy of the translation used by Mariners Church. It is available for purchase online and in the [bookstore](#) at Irvine.

All Scripture references in this guide are CSB unless otherwise noted.

### **HOW TO USE THE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE**

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MAIN POINT

Discussions often take on a life of their own, but they typically lack power when they lack focus. The Discussion Leader ought to use the Main Point to keep everyone on the same page. To do this, you might say something like, "That is very interesting and a good topic for another discussion, but today's study is about..." and ask a question that brings people back to the topic of discussion. There will be times when it makes sense to ignore the Main Point—for example, when someone in your group experiences a significant crisis. If you decide to move away from the lesson's Main Point, you want to do so on purpose and not by accident.

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RHYTHM  
REMINDERS

A prompt will be provided when one of the 7 Rhythms of Rooted has a natural point of emphasis. We want to help everyone continue to grow holistically in their spiritual journeys. Obviously, some rhythms always exist, like prayer, but occasionally it will be helpful to draw fresh attention to or spend additional time in one of the rhythms.

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LEADER NOTES

Where needed, each lesson may have several Leader Notes. This material will provide insight on how to steer the conversation and care for your people. Additionally, these notes will provide greater context to help you understand a difficult word, phrase, or verse.

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LEAN IN  
BREAK THE ICE

These questions will help kick-start your discussion time. The main goal for this time is to get everyone talking and prepare them for the more focused conversation to follow.

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LOOK DOWN  
LOOK AT GOD'S  
WORD

The goal for this section is to let the passage speak for itself and stand on its own. This isn't easy! During this time, you will read the passage out loud (twice) and answer questions focused on the details of the biblical text.

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LOOK OUT  
IDENTIFY THE  
RELEVANCE OF  
GOD'S WORD IN THE  
WORLD

Jesus calls us to love others, just as He loved us. Based on your understanding of the text and how God is transforming your heart, how will you treat others? How will you apply this teaching to all of your relationships and to everyone you will see this week and beyond?

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LOOK IN  
APPLY GOD'S  
WORD

Transformation comes from renewing your mind (Romans 12:2). The goal for this section is to look inward to allow God's Word to change you from the inside out. Use this time to discuss how your thoughts and feelings are affirmed and/or challenged.

Be sure to close your time together in prayer. You can take requests from the group, invite others to lead, and bring God the needs that stood out to you in your group time.

# WEEK 1: A STORY ABOUT GOD

## GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

### PREPARE

Listen and subscribe to the Mariners Life Group Leader Podcast.

If you missed the weekend message or want to review specific points, you can always watch, listen, and find bulletin notes online at [marinerschurch.org/messages](http://marinerschurch.org/messages).

### MAIN POINT

When religious leaders complained that Jesus was spending time with the wrong types of people, Jesus told a story to correct their misunderstanding about God. The story is perhaps Jesus' most famous parable and it centers around a prodigal Father who was eager to celebrate that His lost son had come home. Just as the Father pursues two sons in the parable, the one who parties in a distant land and makes a mess of his life and the one who thinks he is righteous and good in his own merit, our Father pursues the reckless who don't want grace and the religious who think they don't need grace. All of us have been either the rebellious younger brother or the self-righteous older brother and our Father wants us all.

### LEAN IN BREAK THE ICE

**Have you ever been shown radical generosity? What happened? How did it make you feel?**

### LOOK DOWN LOOK AT GOD'S WORD

Read Luke 15:11-31

11 He also said, "A man had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate I have coming to me.' So he distributed the assets to them. 13 Not many days later, the younger son gathered together all he had and traveled to a distant country, where he squandered his estate in foolish living. 14 After he had spent everything, a severe famine struck that country, and he had nothing. 15 Then he went to work for one of the citizens of that country, who

sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 He longed to eat his fill from the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one would give him anything. 17 When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired workers have more than enough food, and here I am dying of hunger! 18 I'll get up, go to my father, and say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired workers.'" 20 So he got up and went to his father. But while the son was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion. He ran, threw his arms around his neck, and kissed him. 21 The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son.'

22 "But the father told his servants, 'Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 Then bring the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let's celebrate with a feast, 24 because this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' So they began to celebrate.

25 "Now his older son was in the field; as he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 So he summoned one of the servants, questioning what these things meant. 27 "Your brother is here,' he told him, 'and your father has slaughtered the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.'

28 "Then he became angry and didn't want to go in. So his father came out and pleaded with him. 29 But he replied to his father, 'Look, I have been slaving many years for you, and I have never disobeyed your orders, yet you never gave me a goat so that I could celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you slaughtered the fattened calf for him.'

31 "'Son,' he said to him, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.

**Read Luke 15:11-31. What stands out to you about the three characters in the parable (The Father, the younger son, and the older son)?**

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LOOK OUT  
IDENTIFY THE  
RELEVANCE IF  
GOD'S WORD IN  
THE WORLD

**Rebellion and self-righteousness can both keep people from God—which posture do you see more often in the world today? Rebellion like we see in the younger brother or self-righteousness like we see in the older brother?**

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LOOK IN  
APPLY GOD'S  
WORD  
TO YOUR LIFE

**Do you identify more with the rebellious younger brother or the self-righteous older brother in this story? Why?**

**How have you experienced the grace and generosity of God in your life?**