



Reading and Reflection Guide for *The Stories We Tell* (Parables Series)

Week of 7/10 – Practicing Faithfulness and Obedience

Read: Matt 25:14-30 Parable of the Talents

Reflect and Respond:

With what unique talents/gifts has God gifted you? How are you investing them for the kingdom?

Read: Luke 19:12-27 The King's Servants

Reflect and Respond:

When have you followed through on a relatively small responsibility that led to a later promotion or recognition?

Read: Matt 21:28-32 The Two Sons

Reflect and Respond:

Have you ever been tempted to “appear to be” obedient, but failed to follow through? What was the result?

Week of 7/17 – Welcoming Others with Humility and Inclusion

Read: Luke 10:29-37 Good Samaritan

Reflect and Respond:

When have you had the opportunity to serve “the least of these” (or someone that you felt was somehow “less than”)? What did you learn about yourself in the experience?

Read: Luke 14:7-14 The Lowest Seat at the Feast

Reflect and Respond:

Have you ever found yourself offering hospitality only to those who can return the favor (or with those who can somehow benefit you in networking, etc.)? How does this parable challenge you?

Read: Luke 18:10-14 The Pharisee and the Tax Collector

Reflect and Respond:

In contrast to the pharisee's prayer, spend some time this week in solitude and silence, confessing your sins to God. Pray, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

Week of 7/24 – Showing Compassion and Care for the Poor

Read: Matt 25:31-46 Sheep and Goats

Reflect and Respond:

Where do you see opportunities in your world to 1) feed the hungry, 2) give water to the thirsty, 3) welcome the

stranger, 4) clothe the naked, and/or 5) visit the sick or imprisoned? Choose to engage in one of these ways this week. Choose another to make a monthly practice, perhaps alongside your family or community group.

Read: Luke 14:15-24 The Great Banquet

Reflect and Respond:

When have you offered excuses and chosen not to engage with a “kingdom opportunity”? How can you invite others to engage with you in meaningful service this week?

Read: Luke 14:28-33 The Cost of Discipleship

Reflect and Respond:

Have you counted the cost of discipleship in your own life? What are some ways you’ve learned to “carry your cross”? Where might God still be calling you to “walk away” from something?

Week of 7/31 – Understanding God’s Grace and Forgiveness

Read: Matt 20:1-16 Laborers in the Vineyard

Reflect and Respond:

Have you ever felt God was “unfair” for his blessing or graciousness toward someone who was “more” of a sinner than you? How would you respond to the landowner’s questions in verse 15?

Read: Luke 7:41-43 (or 36-48 in context) Money Lender Forgives Unequal Debts

Reflect and Respond:

In this story, to whom do you relate more, the sinful woman or the Pharisee? Why? What do you make of Jesus’ comment in verse 48, “whoever has been forgiven little, loves little”?

Read: Matt 18:23-34 The Unmerciful Servant

Reflect and Respond:

Why do you think the servant refused to forgive the smaller debt after he had received such grace? How is God calling you to offer forgiveness to someone in your own life today?

Week of 8/7 – Sharing the Best News Ever

Read: Matt 13:1-23 Parable of the Sower

Reflect and Respond:

Sometimes we get discouraged by the number of lost people who need to know Christ, but our responsibility is to “sow the seed,” not to force a response. Who do you need to “sow the seed” with today?

Read: Luke 15:4-10 Lost Sheep, Lost Coin

Reflect and Respond:

God’s heart is always searching for those who are lost and rejoicing over those who are found. What similarities do you notice in each of these two stories? Who represents God in each story?

Read: Luke 15:11-32 Lost Boys

Reflect and Respond:

Who represents God in this story? What is different about the two “lost boys”? Which one do you most closely identify with and why? What can we learn from each son? What can we learn from the father?