

# THE STORY

## SESSION 7 – LEADER GUIDE

### Before the Meeting

- Contact members and let them know when / where your group gathering will take place.
- Encourage group members to read pages 89-102 from The Story Bible.
- Walk through the material on your own.

### Before You Begin The Lesson:

- We are asking our CARE Groups to consider serving on a Micro-Mission together.
- Discuss a few ideas with the group before starting the lesson material:
  - Adopt a Family from the Alvin / Pearland Head Start program – pick up a packet from New Hope Church starting December 16/17.
  - Help unload and sort gifts for Be An Angel Christmas initiative – December 13/14 at the George R. Brown Convention Center. Contact Elizabeth Sullivan [www.beanangel.org](http://www.beanangel.org). Must be 18+
  - Volunteer December 6 at the Candy Cane Ball for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities at the Power Center. Contact Bethanne Franco [www.aogh.org](http://www.aogh.org). Must be 18+
  - Organize a diaper drive for Pregnancy Resource Medical Center of Ft. Bend. Collect diapers, wipes, and other items to help mothers care for their newborns. Contact Lisa Pearson at [www.prcfortbend.com](http://www.prcfortbend.com).
  - Help load bikes for Elves and More project on December 13 /14. Register at [www.elvesandmore.org](http://www.elvesandmore.org). \$30 per person – all ages welcome.
  - Other – choose a group project of your own. Deliver Christmas dinner to families, collect coats, or visit an assisted living center. Get creative and show the love!

### Leading the Discussion - Session 7

- Congratulations!!! Your group has now passed the half way mark. There are only a few more group lessons before the final Christmas party. Encourage members to continue to make group attendance a priority.
- At this point members are really getting into the flow of CARE Group life. Discussion should be much easier as people become more open with one another. Keep your eye on the clock and move past “optional” questions if needed (look for the “\*”).
- Because this is week 7 it might help to summarize where we are in *The Story* before reading the introduction.
  - In week 1 we discovered that God created man in His image – but **Adam and Eve** messed things up by breaking God’s one rule. Since then, God has been trying to rescue people back into a relationship with Himself.

- In week 2 we learned that God’s plan included starting a new nation which ultimately would solve the sin problem... **Abraham** was chosen because of his incredible ability to trust God and in the end we watch God provide for Abraham.
- In session 3 we talked about a man named **Joseph**. He was one of the sons of Israel and endured incredible hardships throughout his life. However, Joseph knew that God was using his Lower Story to accomplish His will in the Upper Story – God used Joseph’s circumstances to save the nation which would eventually bless all nations.
- In session 4-6 we spent a lot of time with **Moses** as he eventually lead the people to the Promise Land. BTW – Moses did go to heaven even though he didn’t get to go into the Promised Land.
- Today we are going to take a look at what happened as the Israelites enter their new homeland.

### Introduction:

- Ask for a volunteer to read the introductory paragraphs about salmon swimming upstream.

### Talk About It:

- To save a little time and engage all of the group, have everyone discuss this question with the person sitting next to them.

### DVD Teaching Notes:

- Provide pens so group members can take notes as needed.
- Play Session 7 from the DVD (time = 9:45)

### DVD Discussion:

- During the discussion continue to bring people back to the fact that in the Lower Story our giants appear bigger than we are, but in the Upper Story God is bigger than our giants.

1. What did God call his people to do as they got ready to enter the Promised Land (Joshua 1:1-11; The Story, pp. 89-90)?

- Be sure to have someone look up the passage and read it aloud before you answer.
  - *Joshua was told to, “Be strong and courageous.”*
  - *Joshua was also told, “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth.”*
  - *The officers told the people to pack up their supplies and get ready.*

2. The first time spies were sent into the land, twelve of them went. Only two gave a good report; the other ten were so negative that they convinced the people of Israel the rewards weren’t worth the risk. Four decades later, Joshua sent a team of only two into the land. Randy said, “Committees seldom make courageous decisions.” Discuss the value of following a couple

of bold leaders rather than a committee when it comes to those moments when we need to move forward quickly with courage.

- Group members may have a lot of ideas for this question. Ask them to tap into their own experience with a school / work committee.
  - *One value is that decisions get made... If a committee has a few people who are not risk takers they may try to plan for every “what if” scenario.*
  - *Another value is speed... The speed of the leader determines the speed of the team. Group consensus can take a long time.*
  - *Another value is clarity of direction... Indecision will kill momentum and divide teams.*
- Remind the group that the 12 spy approach ultimately lead to 40 more years in the wilderness.

3a. Just like the people of Israel, we sometimes are fearful of challenges and don't want to deal with them. What challenges in your life have you put on the back burner, but you know it is time to face it and deal with it?

- You may *not* get a lot of takers on this question. It's fairly personal, and there is a reason some things are still on the back burner – we don't want to deal with it... You can soften the question, by asking it this way, “*What are some of the challenges other people put on the back burner..?*”

\*3b. How can your group members pray for you, cheer you on, and keep you accountable in this process?

- This question goes along with first part of the question, but I would probably skip it unless you really had someone share something personal in the part “A”.

4a. How does consistent and faith-filled reading of the Bible (God's Story) help us remain strong and courageous as we swim upstream against the currents of this world?

- You can also ask it this way, “How has reading The Story / participating in a CARE Group made you more courageous?”
- Answers might include: “*a) Fear is a constant battle. Reading God's word reminds me that I don't have to be afraid, b) Reading God's word gives me the confidence that all things are possible with God's help, c) When challenges come up I have been able to think about Joseph or Abraham or Moses and remember that they went through some tough situations – but God was always in control.*”

4b. What are your personal habits and commitments when it comes to Bible study?

- Group members may or may have any, or they may feel discouraged about what they have tried and failed to do... If so, ask them to share. If not, encourage them by pointing out how

their commitment to the group is an important habit or that attending church weekly is an important habit.

4c. How can your group members encourage you to grow in your love for God's Word?

- Establishing the habit of daily Bible reading can be tough, but reading through The Story NIV companion Bible is a great way to get started. Discuss ways the group can help each other stay engaged with the weekly reading...

\*5. Joshua read the words of God's story to all the people: children, teens, and the adults. What are ways we can help the children and young people in our lives grow in their knowledge of love for the Bible? How can this be done in both our homes and churches.

- This question might be okay for groups with parents of children. Otherwise, this is a question you may want to omit.
- If you choose to discuss this question, it might be great to talk about The Story resources available in the bookstore or Promiseland for kids.
  - Look at the character cards handed out in PL.
  - Go over the take home page from PL.
  - Read through the children's version of The Story.

6a. Chapter 7 of The Story teaches us that we should always talk with God to make sure he is going before us and that we are not heading off on our own. Why is it so important to pray, listen to God, and follow his leading when we make life decisions?

- You can dive into this question by asking, "*Why was it important for Joshua?*"
- Answers might include: "*I may find myself heading the wrong direction, I may find myself alone – without God, or I might lack confidence and knowledge.*"

6b. What are some of the possible consequences if we forget to do this?

- Again, you can start by asking, "*What were the consequences for the Israelites?*"

6b. What area of your life do you need to commit to more prayer and listening.

- This is the part of the session where God's Upper Story connects to our Lower Story. Encourage everyone in the group to answer this question. No one has to go into specifics, but encourage them to share one area they need to spend more time in prayer. It could be: "*a) finances, b) children, c) job, d) ministry in the church, or e) a relationship.*"

7a. Baptism is an outward sign of our identification with God. What is the meaning of baptism and why is this public celebration so important and powerful?

- Because there may be people from different church backgrounds in your group – there is potential for a variety of answers. Please keep the following in mind.

- Jesus called us as individuals to be baptized and He called the church to baptize people in an effort to make disciples. This is a powerful celebration because it's a picture of what Jesus did for us – he died, was buried, and then rose again. When a person goes under the water and comes up again – it's a visual testimony to what Jesus did for us. More importantly, it's an opportunity to go public with our faith! It's an opportunity to say, from this day forward I'm going to follow Christ.

7b. Have a few people share their baptism stories.

- Ask the group if anyone would like to share.
- Ask the group if anyone is interested in being baptized. If so, contact the church and set a date!

\*8. When Christians live in a world that flows so strongly against the desires and heart of God, we often are identified as believers simply by the way we live. Name some actions that show the world we are followers of Christ.

- Answers will vary. Remind everyone that Jesus made it real simple. We must love God and we must love people.

9. Read movement 2 of The Story (p. 11 of this participant's guide). How have you seen God seeking to reveal his presence, power, and plan in your life?

- Member may or may not know exactly how to answer this question. Encourage them to seek God's leading more and more each week.

**Closing Prayer:**

- Review the 3 points of the closing prayer and ask group members to choose 1 from the list. Ask, "*Looking at the list, how can we pray for you?*"
- Once everyone has shared, close with prayer. This is a great opportunity to include others with group tasks. Be looking for someone from the group who will give the closing prayer.

**Between Sessions:**

- Remind group members to review the exercises before the next meeting.
- Go over where and when the next group gathering will take place.
- Clean up and go home.