



## Stories: Every Life Matters (Parables of the Lost)

Pastor Derek Sanford

Easter Sunday, April 1, 2018

### Life Group Discussion Questions:

1. Leaders, throughout this sermon series consider starting group time by listening to parable (most Bible apps and websites, such as biblegateway.com, have an audio feature). Check out this article about listening to the Word: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/dont-just-read-your-bible/>
2. Thinking back on this week's sermon, was there a particular point or passage that challenged you, confused you, or caught your attention?
3. Read **Luke 15** out loud.
  - a. In verses 1-2 what are the Pharisees grumbling about?
  - b. What are the common threads of all three parables?
  - c. Each story includes rejoicing and celebration- who initiates the celebrating in each story?
  - d. All three of these parables are a response to the attitude of the Pharisees toward "sinners." What is the point Jesus is making in all three stories?
  - e. How would you summarize the teaching of Jesus in this chapter? (have each group member write down 1-2 sentences and share them)
4. At one time we were the lost ones. Allow time for you or someone in your group to share the story of how Jesus "found" them. (prepare this ahead of time)
5. Do you ever find yourself feeling like the Pharisees/ the elder son? Throughout the gospels, Jesus directs his criticism toward the religious leaders, those who thought they were "in" with God. Why are we tempted to become self-righteous? Where do you see this in your life?
6. How can this group be more like Jesus, loving lost people?

**Next Steps:** Write down the names of 3 people in your life who are lost. Commit to: 1- Praying for them, 2- Praying for opportunities to speak and act like Jesus with them

**Prayer Thought:** Praise God for his great love for us- that He loves the lost. Ask God to fill us with His love and compassion for those who are far from Him. *Using first names, everyone in the group can pray aloud for someone on their list.* Ask God for opportunities to share His good news with those people. (Leaders- avoid talking *about* the people in our lives who are lost and just go straight to praying *for* them!)

**Series/Suggested Memory Verse:** "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." **Matthew 11:28-30**



## Stories: You Have Been Entrusted (Parable of the Talents)

Pastor Derek Sanford

April 08, 2018

### Life Group Discussion Questions:

1. Thinking back on this week's sermon, was there a particular point or passage that challenged you, confused you, or caught your attention?
2. **Read Matthew 25:14-30.** Why were the servants in the parable given different numbers of talents? Share about a time you struggled with comparing your gifts and resources to those of other believers. How does this parable show that comparison can be harmful?
3. **Read Romans 12:3-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:14-31.** Discuss how some of the smallest parts of our physical body are the most necessary. How is that true in the Body of Christ? How does our church suffer when believers don't use their gifts?
4. Mark Batterson writes, "Jesus commends the two men who take a risk and make a return. But the servant who buries his talent and breaks even is called "wicked." Why? Because he wasn't willing to take a calculated risk. Maybe risk taking is at the heart of righteousness. Maybe righteousness has less to do with not doing anything wrong and more to do with doing things right. Righteousness is using our God-given gifts to their God-given potential." **Read James 2:14-26** and discuss how using our gifts is an outgrowth of our true faith. What risk are you willing to take to use your gifts?
5. **Matthew 25:31-46.** Jesus' teaching is that if we are real Christ-followers we will be using our gifts and resources to make a difference in our world (Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, ends of the earth.) **Read John 15:4-6.** What is the 'fruit' Jesus talk about here? How is that fruit produced? When it comes to using our gifts in the body of Christ what is our part? What is God's part?

**Next Steps:** a) Take some time to affirm the gifts and resources you feel God has given to each member of your group. b) Decide one way you will hold each other accountable for the use of those gifts and resources in the church.

**Prayer Thought:** *Father, thank You for blessing us with gifts, talents, and resources so we can bless others. We know You don't need us to do Your work, but thank You for inviting us to the privilege of partnering with You to change lives. Help us to be good stewards of all You've given us for Your glory.*



## Stories: The Kingdom (Parable of the Mustard Seed)

Live at all Sites

April 17, 2018

### Life Group Discussion Questions:

7. Thinking back on this week's sermon, was there a particular point or passage that challenged you, confused you, or caught your attention?
8. As you think back to the sermon and the Big Idea, what is the overall main point of the parable of the mustard seed and of the leaven?
9. Jesus is talking to His disciples in **Luke 13:18-21** and asks them two questions in verse 18, and then asks one of those questions again in verse 20. Why do you think he asked, "What is the Kingdom of God like" twice?
10. After reading this passage and hearing the sermon, why do you think Jesus used this question to get to the main point that God uses little things to produce big results?
11. The reading plan this week focuses on God using small numbers, small people, small gifts, and small moments to do great things. Read the following scriptures and discuss where you have seen an example of this in your life:
  - Small numbers.* Jonathan told his armor-bearer (**I Samuel 14:6**) that it makes little difference to God whether He saves by the few or the many.
  - Small people.* The Apostle Paul suggested in **I Corinthians 1:26** that the members of that church look around. God chose to use the nobodies of the world.
  - Small gifts.* No one illustrates this better than the boy who gave his lunch to Jesus (**John 6:9**) or the widow who dropped her two coins into the offering (**Mark 12:42**). Neither had any way of knowing what this meant to the Lord.
  - Small moments.* You decided to wake up earlier each day to read your Bible. You decided to finally have a conversation about God with a friend or co-worker.

### Next Steps:

1. Where in life do you feel like a little seed? You need to recognize the big picture and have patience that God will complete the work in you that He started, Philippians 1:6
2. Where are the little things entrusted to you that God wants to grow? What mustard seeds do you have, that three years from now through the power of Christ, will be trees?

**Prayer Thought:** Split up into pairs or groups of three, and pray for each other's "mustard seeds" to grow into trees.



## Stories: The Good Samaritan

Pastor Marcus Atkinson

April 22, 2018

### Life Group Discussion Questions:

1. Thinking back on this week's sermon, was there a particular point or passage that challenged you, confused you, or caught your attention?
2. Read the parable of the Good Samaritan together, **Luke 10: 25-37**. What sort of "self-talk" do you think was occurring in the minds of the Priest and the Levite as they crossed the road to avoid the beaten man?
3. Upon reflection, we know that often we are the one crossing the road. This being the case, why do we find it so easy to judge the Priest and Levite?
4. Pastor Marcus talked about **apathy**, a lack of feeling or compassion, and he pointed out that too many Christians may be described as apathetic. How do our brothers and sisters outside the church use this truth to justify their own apathy and lack of faith? What can we do to rise above our tendencies to avoid "seeing" and feelings of responsibility?
5. Pastor Marcus said, "Being 'religious' doesn't guarantee compassion. Our religion doesn't make us compassionate. Compassion must be cultivated." Discuss the differences between religion and following Christ.
6. The parable of the good Samaritan reminds us that we must:
  - a. See (see those in your path with a need)
  - b. Feel (read **Romans 12:15**)
  - c. Act (do something to help)
  - d. Accept the cost (compassion exacts a sacrifice such as time or money to help)At which step are you/we most likely to fall short and ignore the teachings of Jesus regarding love for our neighbors?

**Next Steps:** Finally, Pastor Marcus teaches us that the Samaritan was "different", not a Jew, hated by the Jews. We can see the foolishness of such prejudice and yet we struggle with our own. Discuss Pastor Marcus's suggestions to get beyond our fears and disregard for "others".

**Prayer Thought:** Lord, you know our hearts. Help us to be conscious of the "Samaritans/others" in our lives. Father, give us eyes to see and hearts to feel compassion. Help us to open our schedules and our wallets to serve the needy that you put in our path each day. Help us to identify our prejudices, our fears and even hatred of those different than us. Convict us when we are broken in this area. Make us whole, let us love "others". Amen

**Series/Suggested Memory Verse:** "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." **Matthew 11:28-30**



## Stories: You're Invited (Parable of the Wedding Feast)

Pastor John Tiernan

April 29, 2018

### Life Group Discussion Questions:

12. The title of this week's sermon was "You're Invited!" Have group members share about an invitation that they received in their life that they felt privileged to get.
13. Read **Matthew 22:1-14**. Thinking back on this week's sermon was there a particular point or passage that challenged you, confused you or caught your attention?
14. Have group members share why other believers might have been surprised that they had become a Christ follower.
15. **Matthew 22:3-5** tells us that many will not come to the celebration by receiving Jesus as Savior. Some will ignore Jesus and others will be hostile toward the gospel. How can we prepare ourselves for these responses?
16. In **Matthew 22:12** we find out that some will show up but won't stick around. They were fans of Jesus but not followers. How does having this information help us as Christians? How can we avoid being overly discouraged when this happens?
17. **Matthew 22:13** tells us the awful consequences of not accepting Christ's gift of salvation. What does the Bible tell us the consequences are? How should we respond and are we responding as we should?
18. How can we balance having a bold persistence when we share Christ and yet be gentle, respectful and loving? What things should we avoid saying or doing?
19. Read **Romans 15:7**. How can this group do a better job of welcoming new people to this Life Group?

**Next Steps:** Review the three names each group member wrote down in week 1 of this series (from the April 1<sup>st</sup> sermon). Has anyone had opportunity to be like Jesus or talk about Jesus with one of the people on their list?

### Prayer Thought:

- **ADORATION:** Praise God for sending people in your life who invited you to receive Christ.
- **CONFESSION:** Confess your prejudices that keep you from inviting some people.
- **THANKSGIVING:** Thank the Lord for letting us be part of the process that leads others to Jesus.
- **SUPPLICATION:** Pray that God would give the group boldness as they share the gospel with compassion, love and respect.

**Memory Verses:** *"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup>For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." **Matthew 11:28-30***

*"Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God." **Romans 15:7***