

# Friends for God Discussion Guide

## Discover Your Mission Now

### Session 6 Story



#### Big Idea

To bless people on the Jesus Mission, we will share the story of Jesus with people we are seeking to bless.

#### Icebreaker

If you had to put a title on the story you would tell at parties, what would the title of that story be? (you can share the story after group!)

#### Introduction

I enjoy a good story. That's why I love watching movies so much, as they tell a story. I enjoy a good story, but I really enjoy it when it's told well. I have a friend, who has taught me much in this area. He is one of the best storytellers I know. Anytime I'm at a party and I'm with him, I often times listen to him just to learn the art of good story telling.



The story of Jesus is the best story ever told. Before the printing press, people would tell that story over and over and over again; to their friends, family, neighbors, co-laborers, strangers, the sick and hurting, the widow, the orphan...to everyone! Can you imagine if we didn't have the written word of God so accessible to us, it would be very sad and frustrating. However, I feel one of the damages of having it so accessible to us (seriously, how many copies of the Bible do you have in your house – I have about 25) is not being able to tell the story of Jesus in an inspiring, compelling, life-changing kind of way.

We learned earlier in this Big Idea series, that when the woman at the well encountered Jesus, she went back and told everyone about how Jesus is real and how they needed to meet this Savior. In John 4:39-42, it says at that point they believed! As we seek God by beginning in prayer, listening to the needs of those around us, eating with them, serving them, we, over time, prayerfully, will be given permission to tell our story. It is through our story that we can talk about how Jesus has become real to us or is becoming real to us, jumping in the Jesus Mission game to see what God does next.

#### Scripture - John 3:1-5 (MSG)

1-2 There was a man of the Pharisee sect, Nicodemus, a prominent leader among the Jews. Late one night he visited Jesus and said, "Rabbi, we all know you're a teacher straight from God. No one could do all the God-pointing, God-revealing acts you do if God weren't in on it." 3 Jesus said, "You're absolutely right. Take it from me: Unless a person is born from above, it's not possible to see what I'm pointing to—to God's kingdom." 4 "How can anyone," said Nicodemus, "be born who has already been born and grown up? You can't re-enter your mother's womb and be born again. What are you saying with this 'born-from-above' talk?" 5 Jesus said, "You're not listening."

1. How would you describe in your own words what's taking place in this passage up to this point?
2. Can you share a time where you felt someone wasn't listening to you or that you weren't listening to them?

#### John 3:5-9 (MSG)

# Friends for God Discussion Guide

## Discover Your Mission Now

### Session 6 Story



THE BIG IDEA

5-6 Jesus said, "You're not listening." Let me say it again. Unless a person submits to this original creation—the 'wind-hovering-over-the-water' creation, the invisible moving the visible, a baptism into a new life—it's not possible to enter God's kingdom. When you look at a baby, it's just that: a body you can look at and touch. But the person who takes shape within is formed by something you can't see and touch—the Spirit—and becomes a living spirit. 7-8 "So don't be so surprised when I tell you that you have to be 'born from above'—out of this world, so to speak. You know well enough how the wind blows this way and that. You hear it rustling through the trees, but you have no idea where it comes from or where it's headed next. That's the way it is with everyone 'born from above' by the wind of God, the Spirit of God." 9 Nicodemus asked, "What do you mean by this? How does this happen?"

3. In vv. 7-8 I am reminded about the Spirit and His ability to be unpredictable. How have you felt God moving in unpredictable ways while you were sharing the story of Jesus with someone? If you've never experienced this, in what ways do you need to rely more upon God's Spirit in spiritual conversations?

#### John 3:10-12 (MSG)

10-12 Jesus said, "You're a respected teacher of Israel and you don't know these basics? Listen carefully. I'm speaking sober truth to you. I speak only of what I know by experience; I give witness only to what I have seen with my own eyes. There is nothing secondhand here, no hearsay. Yet instead of facing the evidence and accepting it, you procrastinate with questions. If I tell you things that are plain as the hand before your face and you don't believe me, what use is there in telling you of things you can't see, the things of God?"

4. What does Jesus say in vv. 10-12 about Nicodemus' questions? Share a time where you felt the Spirit challenging you to take a spiritual conversation to a deeper level with someone.

#### John 3:16-18 (MSG)

16-18 "This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? Because of that person's failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him.

5. Nicodemus seems to be testing Jesus' patience in their dialogue. How has someone tested your patience in you telling the story of Jesus?
6. Jesus models for us the elegance of a great story that compels even a biblical scholar to rethink their understanding of God. How you would put into words what Jesus is saying to Nicodemus in regards to being born again in plain language (no churchy words)?

Most are familiar with John 3:16, but how many of us knew it's a verse from a conversation of Jesus helping someone find their way back to Him? The context is beautiful.

# Friends for God Discussion Guide

## Discover Your Mission Now

### Session 6 Story

---



THE BIG IDEA

7. How is this a reminder about how we are to approach leading people towards the salvation Jesus talks about in 3:16?

Nicodemus was one of 2 people who removed Jesus from the cross after he was crucified (John 19). This John 3 encounter changed his life for eternity. I can imagine the tears he must have shed as he removed Jesus' crucified body from the cross and prepared him for burial.

8. How are you allowing the reality of Jesus to change your life? How is God challenging you to share your story to others about how Jesus is real in your life?

#### Bonus Question

Dick Staub author of *Too Pagan, Too Christian* challenges how we think about traditional evangelism. In his book he essentially says, "If you knew someone wasn't going to ever become a Christian, would you still be there friend?"

9. What are your thoughts on this? How does this challenge your current line of thinking in spiritual conversations and pointing someone to Jesus?

#### Next Steps

Maybe you haven't yet said yes to Jesus. Be sure to get your questions answered, but don't be like Nicodemus and simply dodge the reality of Him by empty questions. Say yes to Jesus today and celebrate it with your small group.

Practice telling your story; how has Jesus become real to you and changed everything in your life? Take the time to write out your story and share it with your small group.

#### Session 6 – Leader's Guide

1. I like challenging our group members to wrestle through sharing Scripture in a way that makes sense to them – in their plain language – because that is how the Bible was shared for centuries. Jesus and Nicodemus are having a private, intimate conversation about the Holy Spirit and being "born again" as a God-follower. Jesus is rocking Nicodemus' world! Nicodemus that he had a handle on things as the biblical scholar (part of the Sanhedrin – legalistic, religious sect during Jesus' day) – and really Nicodemus was only scratching the surface as Jesus talks about this kind of religion in John 5: 39,40.
2. Classic. There are plenty of sociological studies that show we are not great listeners. Often times the best skill we have while someone is telling us something, is thinking about what we are going to say once they're jaw stops moving. Sad. We have got to get better at simply holding out thoughts and genuinely wrestling through what someone is trying to say to us. "Why are they talking to me about their job right now?" "Why did she just share that about her marriage?" "I wonder if he told me about that addiction because he's finally beginning to trust me. God what do I say next?" It's time we listen.
3. The Holy Spirit is the most powerful force on the planet – He is God within us. Jesus told us in Acts 1:8, that the Holy Spirit is going to come inside us and change the world. The Holy Spirit does this life change as we serve the communities around us and as we share the story of Jesus to those who are far from God. Often times, the Holy Spirit can

# Friends for God Discussion Guide

## Discover Your Mission Now

### Session 6 Story



THE BIG IDEA

be unpredictable – that can drive us crazy. But we need to get better at celebrating the mystery of God and stop relying upon a God that fits in a box. There is not a box big enough on the planet to contain what God can do through a person who genuinely yields themselves to the power of the Holy Spirit.

4. God wants to speak to us even in the moment of a spiritual conversation. It is good for us to pray for wisdom, discernment, sensitivity...before we talk to someone about Jesus, but we can also seek God as we speak – asking God to give us a unique perspective to the conversation as it unfolds. As we seek to do this more often, I think we will find that God is not as linear as most of us think.
5. Rocky soil (Luke 8:4-15). Those who aren't quite ready to receive the Gospel. They act all curious or even hostile with their questions, but they aren't really open or they aren't really sure what they want. I've experienced that many times. It saddens me, even though it can be great practice! We need to discern what God is really saying through these conversations. Is this person authentically searching or are they simply wasting time. I'm not saying God wants us to give up on those individuals, but to instead pray for God to break through the hardened soil so we can get to fertile ground to plant the seed of the Gospel – like Jesus did with Nicodemus.
6. This will be a tough exercise for most. Again, my intention here is to get us as Christ-followers to get speak in plain language – so that the people we are sharing the story of Jesus to, get it. Encourage everyone to participate and remind them there is no wrong answer and to maybe come up with their own metaphors.
7. I love John 3:16. However, often times I only see that text when it's on a billboard or on a massive poster at a football game. Interesting part is that this conversation (John 3:16) takes place in an intimate dialogue not blasted from rooftops without any personal intimacy. I guess I'm trying to help us get this...sharing the story of Jesus can be done with strangers, no doubt. God is at work in people's lives without us ever saying a word, so I understand some will be ready to say yes to Jesus through an ad, poster or bullhorn. However, most require a relationship, a friendship. Jesus models his salvation path through spiritual conversation; through someone seeking.
8. This is simply about getting back to the roots of why even share the story of Jesus. I once heard Tim Keller, author of Reason for God, talk about this. He basically said we need to let the Gospel penetrate our hearts before we can tell others about Jesus. Sounds simple, but most of us haven't done that – which is probably why we aren't so actively involved in telling others. Encourage your group members to share on this one – to really get to the core as to why they love Jesus and how He's currently changing their life. If you have non-believers in the group, as if they would be willing to share where they're at on their spiritual journey. Referencing Luke 15, and the story of the Prodigal Son will be helpful in this conversation too...recognizing the son who is far from the father and how he wants to come back home, but just isn't sure how.
9. Dick Staub is challenging our current line of thought. We treat our non-Christian friends like projects. We simply see them as a “get-them-to-church-baptize-them” kind of project. Staub suggests that people know that. They can sense it. If we see them as a project, we treat them like that, and they can feel that. He instead encourages us to see our relationships as a relationship. Self-sacrificing, loving, patient-filled relationship. Allow God to work through that, see it as a journey and not focus on the end result.