

united kingdom

LEADERS'
GUIDE

the Kingdom story from creation to revelation

THE STORY

The written story you see has been “pre-crafted” for you. That means that the biblical text that we have used for the example story is written. *Italics* signify where the text has been changed. Ellipses signify where parts of the text have been left out for ease of storytelling. All text is taken from either the 1996 or 2004 New Living Translation, unless otherwise noted. The New Living Translation has been chosen because it is a dynamic translation of the Bible, meaning that it has translated idea for idea instead of word for word from the Hebrew and Greek. It is a highly accurate meaning-based translation combined with an easy-to-read English.

The written story is not meant to be memorized word for word. It is meant as a guide for you as you learn to tell the story in your own words and from your own heart. This written story is provided to give you a starting point as you craft the story in your own style and language while remaining faithful to the biblical text. For example, you’ll find that the recorded story may be slightly different than the written story.

All changes in wording made in this pre-crafted story have been checked for biblical accuracy. Some parts of the story have been omitted. These omissions are made in order to make the story easier to re-tell and to help the audience focus on the main reason that we are telling the story. You may feel strongly that a part of the story that has been omitted in the guide should be in the story. You are welcome to include that part of the story in your version; however, we asked that you judge the inclusion of the story by the same criterion: (1) Is my audience able to retell this story; and (2) Does this inclusion contribute to the theme for which this story has been selected?

The over-arching theme of this story set is “God’s Kingdom,” so we have made decisions based on whether the information will contribute to that theme. We recognize that not every story in the Bible is in this story set, but we’ve chosen some of the stories that build understanding of God’s Kingdom. We want our listeners to understand the main points of each story while developing this theme.

TELLING THE STORY

The sub-sections below are designed to help you as you learn the stories and prepare to lead a story session with your group.

- **Why this story?**
This section gives you a “headline” for the story, and an explanation of how this story fits into this set about God’s Kingdom.
- **Key concepts to include in this story**
This section lists the key concepts that should be present in your story when you tell it, even if you forget other small details.
- **Notes about how the story was crafted**
You may look at the example story and wonder why we’ve made certain decisions. This section attempts to explain some of those decisions. But if you have more questions or if our explanations aren’t satisfactory, please ask!

DISCUSSION POINTS

This section is designed to help you discuss this story with your group.

- **Retelling the story**

This section gives you teaching ideas (e.g. how you can break up the story into scenes so your group can learn it more easily).

- **Questions for discussion**

This section lists the eight questions that you can ask about every story—you may choose to word them differently. None of the questions have a “right” answer, except for the 6th one. The only way you can remember a story well is by telling it! The other questions are meant to open up discussion with the group. People should feel comfortable to say whatever they want to about the story, without feeling like there is a correct way to feel or interpret the story. You’ll find as you work through the questions that the Holy Spirit uses the discussion to bring out good points! Your group may leave this discussion time with some questions, so be prepared to allow the storyline to speak for itself, rather than feeling like you need to find all the answers by the end of a story.

Allow your group to embark on a journey of discovery as they experience God’s Word in a chronological format. A general rule of thumb when discussing a story is to always look backward and rarely forward, meaning feel free to utilize any of the stories already covered in discussing the current story. In this way, your group will begin a hermeneutical process by which they allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. However, we generally try not to utilize Scripture that has not already been covered in interpreting the current story because not all members of the group have the same biblical knowledge. We do not want some members to feel they have less to contribute than others or feel that they need to ‘study ahead’ in order to fully understand the story. The questions are designed to allow each member to engage with the story and discover truths from the story on their own.

You don’t have to ask all of these questions in your discussion times. These questions are discussion starters, but you will find that often, once people feel comfortable with the process, they talk about many of these things naturally. However, these questions are helpful to keep a conversation going where needed, and they provide a logical sequence of working through the story. Even if you don’t ask all the questions in a story session, try to at least ask what this story means for their life. You’ll find that as you continue to interact with God’s Word at a deep level, God’s Spirit will reveal things for your life in a wonderful way!

Some people may find the 7th question challenging and feel pressure to “perform.” The question is not meant as a performance question, but aims to help raise our awareness of opportunities God may bring for us to share these stories. You may find that people in your connect group would like to share a name of someone they would like to tell the story to so that the connect group could pray for that to happen. Even if people don’t feel that they have anyone outside their family to tell the story to, the group could encourage each other to tell the story to themselves during the week as a meditation time. Then, when there is an opportunity in the future, they are ready to tell the story.

- **Questions people may have**

You should try to avoid debates or long discussions about theological issues during your discussion time. Try instead to ask God what this story means for you today. However, we realize that some people may want more answers, and that's OK. If one person in your group has questions, you may find it better to discuss those questions with them outside of the group time. If several in the group have other questions, note them down and discuss them after doing the "questions for discussion," or come back to those questions in the next session.

This section of the guide gives some basic information about questions people may have. However, this section is in no way exhaustive. Many of these topics have had entire books written about them! We have included a bibliography of commentaries used in this guide, but please contact us if you still have questions! We'd love to help you find the answers, sit down and discuss them with you, and be a support for you as you guide your group.

WHAT DOES A STORY SESSION LOOK LIKE?

The basic answer to this question is 'whatever is best for your group to engage with God's Word and with one another.' At the same time, we would like to provide you with some practical steps that may help you as you plan your storying times together.

First, you must realize that the storying group is not an academic exercise. It is a means for your group to fully engage with God's Word in a safe, encouraging, as well as challenging environment. Members of your group should feel they are heard and that they are cared for. Therefore, the first things that the group should do together are worship and pray.

The group leader should also ask about any decisions that had been made in the previous session. For example, if everyone gave the name of someone with whom they were going to share the story, ask what happened when they told the story. This isn't the leader checking to see if the group did their "homework." It is the leader showing enough care and concern for the group to ask about the decision the group member has already made. This gives the group an opportunity to rejoice, to pray for, or offer encouragement to one another. Someone in the group may have shared a breakthrough in the previous session. It is important that he/she have a chance to share how God is at work in their lives. No one should be overly pressured to share, but everyone should be encouraged to share for the benefit of themselves and the group.

Next, the group leader should review the previous session's story. The leader should encourage a member of the group to tell the story from the last session. If no one is willing to tell the story, the group leader should "walk"¹ the group back through the story.

The leader should then share this week's story with the group. It is often helpful for the leader to tell the story twice for the benefit of the group. It is important that each member of the group hear the story at least three times before trying to tell the story himself/herself. The third time the story is told could be by a member of the group who is confident to retell the

¹ The leader "walks" the group back through the story by telling only a short snippet of the story then asking the group to tell the next part of the story. The leader continues to prompt the group to retell the next portion of the story until the group has told the entire story.

story or by the group leader “walking” the group back through the story, or (optionally) having the group use a creative means of retelling the story together.²

Each person in the group should have a chance to tell the story. It is important that a person tell a story in order for them to learn it and fully engage with the truths of the story. The group should pair off in groups of twos. Each person should tell as much of the story as they can. They are not likely to be able to tell the story perfectly. Encourage each person to tell the story twice. If there are people in the group who do not feel up to telling the story, encourage them to tell as much of the story as they can. In any case, do not force someone to tell the story if they do not want to tell it. If someone does not want to tell the story, they may join a group to become a third-person observer.

Once everyone has had a chance to tell the story, the leader should gather everyone together and ask discussion questions. The following are the suggested questions. You are not obligated to ask all of the questions, nor are you obligated to formulate the questions using the same wording. However, please realize there is a tried and tested hermeneutical pattern to the suggested questions. Please keep this pattern in mind if you make any adjustments to the questions.

The questions follow a format of OBSERVATION - INTERPRETATION – APPLICATION – MULTIPLICATION:

- OBSERVATION
 - 1 What did you like in the story?
 - 2 Is there anything that bothered you in the story?
- INTERPRETATION
 - 3 What does this story say about God?
 - 4 What does the story say about people?
- APPLICATION
 - 5 How does this story apply to you personally?
- MULTIPLICATION
 - 6 How will you remember this story?
 - The only right answer to this question is to retell the story. The average person must retell a story five times before they can say that they “know” the story.
 - 7 When can you see yourself telling this story and to whom should you tell this story?

At the end of the session, pray for another and any issues that may have arisen during the discussion time. The group should also commit to praying for on another throughout the week, particularly that each member for the group will apply the truths of the story to their lives during the week and that they would have an opportunity to share the story.

² The story may be retold in numerous creative ways: drama, storyboarding, drawing the main point, Frieze frame, etc... These creative retellings are very helpful for the group to visualize the story and break the story into its component scenes. Such creative ways of retelling are extremely helpful for the group to learn the story.