

## INTRODUCTION

Over the next few weeks, each of you will tell your story.

You may be eager to let others know who you are ...

or you may be filled with anxiety.

Either way, use the information and exercises in this section to help you prepare.

### THE MEMBERS OF YOUR GROUP HAVE CHOSEN TO BE IN

**COMMUNITY**—a kind of community different from the teams, work environments, and casual friendships we normally experience.



Like you, they're looking for a community that spurs them into growth and a meaningful relationship with God and others. *Challenge yourself to be open and transparent. Let these people know who you really are.*

## WEEKLY READING: THE FIVE THINGS

When people tell their faith stories, five things appear over and over again—five things God uses to grow our faith. They're ways of recognizing how God is already involved in each of our lives. It's a great way for you to think through your own story.

### PRACTICAL TEACHING

Studying the Bible and listening to sermons make Scripture seem alive and relevant in our daily lives. They show us who God is, who we are, and who God wants us to be.

### PROVIDENTIAL RELATIONSHIPS

God uses the people in our lives to influence us in extraordinary ways. He speaks to us through others—whether lifelong friends or short-term acquaintances. Even difficult relationships can be used by God for our good.

### PRIVATE DISCIPLINES

Things like prayer, personal time reading the Bible, fasting, and solitude deepen our relationship with God. They get our hearts in sync with his.

### PERSONAL MINISTRY

Jesus showed us that we find life by giving our lives away. When we serve others, we are privileged to partner with God in what he's doing in the lives of those we serve.

### PIVOTAL CIRCUMSTANCES

When big things happen, good or bad, they change the way we interact with God. Circumstances often cause us to pay attention to what he's doing in our lives.

As you think about your own story, consider how the five things have played a part in your journey with God.

You don't have to talk about all five things, but maybe you've had a providential relationship or two that were crucial to growing your faith. Or maybe a pivotal circumstance revealed God's presence in your life. Or maybe a mission trip or other form of personal ministry changed your relationship with God. Very often, these five things represent changes in direction, challenges overcome, or life-changing revelations—things that make for interesting stories.



In a good story, a character wants something and overcomes obstacles to get it. When you think about it, your life's like that too. Whether you are looking for the perfect job, trying to get into the right school, or even falling in love, your story is probably about working for things you think will make you happy or give you a sense of purpose and meaning.

As you think about telling your story, consider the things you've wanted—career, family, adventure, spiritual experiences—and the obstacles you've faced while pursuing them.

**BUT REMEMBER:** The goal of your story isn't to entertain. It's not to be dramatic or funny (though it may be both). It's to share with your group the events and experiences that have helped to make you who you are.

## MOVING FORWARD

As you think through your story, it may be helpful to ask the following questions:

- *Who are the people who have most influenced me?*
- *What are my greatest successes? What obstacles did I overcome to achieve those successes?*
- *What are my greatest failures? What did I learn from those failures?*
- *In what ways has God influenced my relationships, successes, and failures?*

If it helps, use the blank pages that follow to write notes, an outline, or a rough draft of your story. Keep in mind, though, that your story doesn't have to be polished and perfect. The most important thing is that it expresses who you are.

**Reminder:** Throughout Sessions 4-6, each member of your small group will be sharing their story, so please allow enough time for their stories to be told. During Sessions 5 and 6 there will be no video segments to watch in order to allow each member the time they need to tell their story.

*I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you.*

1 Corinthians 11:2

