



## Group Discussion Guide

### Long Story Short Week 4: Your Story

**Big Idea:** *Does your story point to Jesus?*

**(!) IMPORTANT Leader Note (!):** This week's group will be a little different. Since we didn't have a normal sermon, we're using this opportunity to help our group members think about their stories, and write them down. We'll still ask some questions, but big portions of our time together will be devoted to reflection and personal response. **Here's a few helpful tips to prepare well for group this week:**

- **Print out or email along the "Story Cheat Sheets"** - It's everything your group members will need to walk through your group this week. *We've added it as a second attachment in the email this week.*
- **Consider sending a quick email to your group** to tell them group will be a bit different this week. Don't reveal too much, but let them know this is a week they won't want to miss!
- **Consider asking them to bring a notebook and something to write with.** Or at least have items on hand your group can use this week.
  - They can use their cell phone notepad, too!
- **Questions?** Email me at [daniel@fcc-online.org](mailto:daniel@fcc-online.org). I'd love to help!

## ICEBREAKER: (5 MIN)

- **Question:** On Sunday, we used our message time in a different way. We listened to the stories of real people from FIRST who desire for their stories to point to Jesus. *Why are our stories such an important part of our faith?*

## CONNECT: (5 MIN)

- **Say this:** *Throughout our time together as a group we have tried our best to grow in our relationship with God and each other. Most of the time we do this by hanging out, studying the bible together, and by praying for one another. But one of the best ways we can intentionally grow is by sharing our stories and listening to one another.*
- **Connect Question:** Most people are afraid of speaking publically, even if it's just in front of a few people. When you think about sharing your story (even just in front of our group), how does that make you feel?

## BEFORE, BUT, BECAUSE (YOUR STORY): (45 MIN)

- **Say This:** *Let me set you at ease... we aren't going to force anyone to share their story today. But today, we want to use our time together to practice and focus on our personal stories. We'll still ask a few questions as a group, but most of our time will be spent reflecting and responding on our own.*

### BEFORE (15 mins):

- **Prompt (Say this):** We all have a backstory that makes us unique. So we're going to take some time now to think about our stories **before** we decided to follow Jesus as our Lord and Savior.
- **Prompt (On your own):** *What are 3 big events in life that were defining moments for you before you decided to follow Jesus? These could be positive or negative experiences. They could even be relationships that span a longer period. Why did you choose those events, and how did they impact you?*
- **Prompt (On your own):** If you haven't made a decision to follow Jesus this still applies to you! *You can write down the 3 biggest defining moments or relationships in your life and how they have impacted you.*
  - **We'll take 10 minutes to do this.**
  - **(Leader Note:** Consider reading the prompts a couple of times and answering questions your group members may have. Also, use this time to work through the exercise yourself.)
  - **(Leader Note:** Consider setting a timer for this portion of the group.)
- **Question (after 10 minutes)** Is thinking about your past easy, difficult, refreshing, challenging? And why?

### BUT (15 mins):

- **Prompt (Say this):** Most people who have decided to follow Jesus can point to a specific moment, or series of moments, when they decided to do so. Our lives were going one way, **but** then Jesus showed up. Now we're going to think about how we individually decided to follow Jesus.
- **Prompt (on your own):** *When did you decide to follow Jesus? Who helped you along the way? Why did you ultimately decide to trust Jesus as your Lord and Savior?*

- **Prompt (on your own):** If you haven't made a decision to follow Jesus, this may seem a bit confusing. But asking good questions can help us in our confusion. *What are 3 big questions you have about God and Jesus, and how could we help you dive into those?*
  - **We'll take 10 minutes to do this.**
  - **(Leader Note:** Consider reading the prompts a couple of times and answering questions your group members may have. Also, use this time to work through the exercise yourself.)
  - **(Leader Note:** Consider setting a timer for this portion of the group.)
- **Read (after 10 minutes): Luke 15:1-7**
- **Question:** This story Jesus told is a powerful example of how every human story matters to Jesus. When you realize God views you in the same way, how does that make you feel?

### **BECAUSE (15 mins):**

- **Prompt (Say this):** If you're paying attention, you'll notice that people who have truly decided to follow Jesus are never the same. Maybe it doesn't happen overnight, but when you look back on a life committed to Jesus, things are just different. So now we're going to take some time to think about how our stories are different **because** of Jesus.
- **Prompt (on your own):** What about you has changed because of your decision to follow Jesus? How is God continuing to transform you because of your decision to follow Jesus day-by-day?
- **Prompt (on your own):** If you haven't made a decision to follow Jesus, *what is something about yourself that you wish was different? What have you tried to do to change that about yourself?*
  - **We'll take 10 minutes to do this.**
  - **(Leader Note:** Consider reading the prompts a couple of times and answering questions your group members may have. Also, use this time to work through the exercise yourself.)
  - **(Leader Note:** Consider setting a timer for this portion of the group.)

### **RESPOND/PRAYER: (15 MIN)**

- **Prompt:** Before our group starts up again in 2019, I want each of us to set up a time to share our story with someone we trust. You can use your story cheat sheet to help.
  - **(Leader Note:** Offer yourself to meet with anyone, but encourage your group members to meet with someone else in the group they trust.)
- **Prompt:** "Who did you B.L.E.S.S. this week?"
  - **(Leader Note:** If needed, explain the idea of B.L.E.S.S. to your group. **Refer to the cheat sheet at the bottom of the discussion guide).**
- **Prompt:** Pray that God would open our eyes to see the people who He wants us to B.L.E.S.S. where we live work and play.
- **Prompt:** Spend time sharing prayer requests.

## WRAP UP:

- **Say this:** Our stories matter because we matter to Jesus. But do our stories point to Jesus? Taking the time to think about our lives “**before, but and because**” of Jesus gives us the chance to evaluate where we are at in our relationship with Him. God will continue to transform us as you use our stories to point to Jesus.

# FIRST Groups B.L.E.S.S. Updates

At FIRST, *our groups exist to help us grow in our relationship with God and each other.* But for what? Why does God want us to grow? We are convicted that God wants to use the strength and community of our groups, to bless the people where we live work and play. Especially the people we know who do not have a relationship with God. This is how we'll fulfill the Jesus Mission to "go and make disciples" (Matt 28-18-20).

As groups, **we want to intentionally "B.L.E.S.S." people each week.**<sup>1</sup> *What do we mean by that?*

**B - Begin with prayer:** We will pray for the people where we live work and play.

**L - Listen:** We will intentionally listen to the people in our lives where we live work and play.

**E - Eat:** We will share meals with the people where we live work and play.

**S - Serve:** We will respond to the needs we discover among the people where we live, work, and play.

**S - Story:** We will share the story of Jesus and what He is doing in our lives with the people where we live work and play.

## So in your group:

- *Start every prayer time by asking, "who did you B.L.E.S.S. this week?"*
- Write down what each of your group members say, and follow up week by week.
- **ENCOURAGE:** This is not meant to shame, but to empower us to take intentional steps to be a blessing. If all else fails, you can encourage timid or nervous group members to start by intentionally praying for God to open doors for them to be a blessing (Colossians 4:2-3)
- Continue to share personal prayer requests and praises.

This subtle shift in times of prayer can lead to a massive impact over time. Thanks for helping your group grow and be a blessing!

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<sup>1</sup> This B.L.E.S.S. acronym was originally developed as a church resource by Dave Ferguson. [https://smile.amazon.com/Discover-Your-Mission-Dave-Ferguson/dp/0983086486/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1539805578&sr=8-1&keywords=discover+your+mission+now](https://smile.amazon.com/Discover-Your-Mission-Dave-Ferguson/dp/0983086486/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1539805578&sr=8-1&keywords=discover+your+mission+now)