

We Didn't See It Coming Week 4

Leader guide

LEAN IN // 5 minutes

Leader note: You are guiding your group in understanding how our stories matter in building community while glorifying Jesus during seasons of change. Living in community and unity, we are able to walk alongside each other because of our common, shared experiences. We can understand each other's pain when we have experienced similar pain. It was part of Jesus' story. He came and became man so we would know He understands our stories – our pain, our joy and even our sin, even though he himself did not sin. Our stories also help us take part in His plan of

redemption in they enable us to reach the lost and share the gospel.

What's your favorite story to tell or hear? Why?

Sample Answers:

- The one my dad tells about when he got his first job working as a bellhop and all the people he met, and how it taught him to treat everyone well.
- My mom's story of being the first in her family to earn a college degree and being one of 2 women in the firm.
- My dad's story of how he met my mom – you can almost see the love and how he felt in his voice.
- My sister's story of traveling abroad junior year of college and all the different things she experienced.
- The story my mom tells of the road trip we took when we were little.
- My dad's story of his time in the military and the friends he made and lost there –

how he loved well.

- My mom's story of the day I was born and how I was the easy baby.
- My dad's version of my high school years.
- My father's toast at our wedding – how much he loves me.

Leader note:

As you transition to these passages, remember God entrusts us with our

stories – He knew they would happen, the successes and the struggles, pain and He

wastes nothing. God uses all things for good – not only to transform and grow us spiritually, but also to reach out to a lost world with hope through our stories as they show the grace, mercy, forgiveness, love and eternal life through Jesus.

LOOK DOWN // 20 minutes

Leader note: Help your group dig deeper into the passage and see how the parables are more than just stories, but stories which empower us to live in community and unity, build up the church so we may love each other and the world and share not just our stories but His rescue and redemption in our stories so the world will know we belong to Jesus and they can as well. In this, Jesus is glorified and lives are changed.

Matthew 25:14-30

In this passage, what do you learn about telling your story?

Sample Answers:

- Our stories are stories of talents.
- When you share your story, it gets doubled back.
- When you don't share your story, you are just bearing it.
- Stories are valuable.
- Our stories are entrusted to us for God's glory.
- None of our stories are exactly the same.
- Our stories have some things in common, mainly how we use the talents,

experiences we are given.

- Our stories aren't just for ourselves.
- Jesus can't be glorified if we hide our story of His redemption in our lives.
- Our stories allow us to share in the Kingdom here on earth – in the Gospel.

LOOK OUT // 15 minutes

Leader note:

Where do you see believers' stories impacting the world?

Sample Answers:

- Where others who believed they are too broken for God are coming to church after hearing a saved ex-addict.

Help your group understand how our stories help us live in community, engage others in their brokenness and bring Jesus' love and hope to the world. In the process, our pain is redeemed to help others see Jesus, and, in turn, transforms both us and the world.

- In chemotherapy centers where a woman shares her story of God healing her breast cancer and shares His love for the women who are hurting physically and emotionally.
- In serving where a speaker shares his story of having been homeless and how God rescued him.
- In MOPS where moms share their struggles and God's grace and abundance in their roles as moms.
- In life or small groups where others' stories of how God restored and redeemed marriages gives us hope for our marriages.
- In listening to a couple speak about answered prayer for a child when you are trying to get pregnant.
- A missionary's stories of sex slaves being freed, girls being rescued before the sex traders can get to them because of the doors God opened and the people He empowered to help.
- The prison mission's stories of men coming to know Jesus, changing their lives in prison, which, in turn, is changing those men's families' lives.

LOOK IN // 15 minutes

Leader note:

What powerful stories of disappointment or pain do you have?

Sample Answers:

- When I had cancer, and, while I was healed, I had to go through chemotherapy even though I prayed for God to remove the tumor.
- When my brother died in a motorcycle accident at 26.
- When I failed out of college and had to start over at another school.
- When my daughter's husband left her.
- When my husband/wife cheated on me.
- When I had a miscarriage.
- When I lost my job, house, etc.
- When I was addicted to pain medicine after knee surgery.

What stories of overcoming obstacles do you have? Leader Note:

Sharing our stories is easier when things go well than when God allows

some form of suffering, a job loss, disease, loss of a child, addiction, divorce, etc.

Understanding how God is present in both situations and how He redeems our stories allows the Holy Spirit to transform us, grow us spiritually and allows us to step into the

world with the purpose of sharing Jesus' love with the world.

Some of the stories we love come from pain in the past and our sense of

conquering the obstacles. It does not mean the story ends with a happy conclusion, but

that we found our way to victory in our circumstances. Help your group see the often

quoted truth in Romans 8:28 "God works all things together for good for those that love

Him: This verses does not mean it goes the way we want, but that God works with us in

it and we find our way to God to celebrate His goodness.

Sample Answers:

- The story of when I was promoted after losing my last job and finding something I was not sure was going to provide for my family – now we have abundance.
- The story about how we ended up pregnant after trying for so long – or when we were able to adopt a child.
- The story of me graduating from college/or transferring into a college I dreamed of going to after being rejected the first time.
- The one where my son won a science fair – I helped him find a project he could get excited about and became passionate and working hard at.
- The story about how I lost weight I worked hard to lose.
- When I ran a marathon, a goal I had for years.
- The story of how I met my wife/husband after thinking I was too old to find

someone... or a bad break up... or having given up on the possibility of finding someone to spend my life with.

What would it look like to tell your story of disappointment or pain?

Leader Note: This may be more of a discussion or something to leave the group with. God can only redeem our past. He can't redeem the future, as it is yet to be, but the past can be redeemed – provide solace or hope to others. What are they afraid of? How might God use their stories to build up others? Improve their relationship with others? Teach others about God's presence, love or mercy?

LIVE IT OUT // 5 minutes

Leader Note: What would it take to help your group understand the value of their stories – of God's presence in their stories – to build relationships, community, unity – and to bring Jesus' story of love, forgiveness and grace to others?

What if you shared your stories, especially those of pain, those you are most afraid to share – with other believers, and those living without the hope of

Jesus? What would be different in the world around us? Who might be reached for Jesus? How might it change us? How might it change the world?