

Theme Verse: Ephesians 2:8



Purpose of this session: This session is designed to review and wrap up the five stories in the Story Kit. This session is meant to be used by groups that have completed the prior five lessons.

(Remember to set up your space: Altar cloth in the center of your circle, unlit candle in the middle, letter tiles scattered, filled water bottle, flip flop, question mark, and scripture book around the candle.)

Additional Supplies Needed for this Session:

Copy of scrabble competition worksheet for each person

Pens

GATHERING ACTIVITY: Scrabble Competition

Give everyone a sheet of paper with all the scrabble letter tiles used in the story kits. Set a timer for 5 minutes. In teams or as individuals, have them compete to see who can spell the most words out of the letter tiles. They may only use each tile once per word.

After the five minutes have everyone return to the circle, tally up their words, and share some of their favorite words found.

Leader: **We have spent the last five sessions together, gathered around this story kit, seeking God's word through five Biblical texts. Today we return to these stories and hear the theme scripture text for the Gathering.**

LETTER TILES FOR THIS SESSION: Leaving the other letters scattered, pull out the letters C-H-A-N-G-E U-S



OPENING RITUAL:

Leader: **We gather together as God's people, intentionally seeking a word from God, believing that God's word has the power to change us...**

We believe God's word has the power to CHANGE US.

God's **C A L L** Changes Everything.

Story: Moses and the Burning Bush.

RITUAL ACTION: Light the Candle

Leader: **We remember the word of God that comes to us through the story of Moses and the burning bush. God came to Moses amidst his everyday, mundane life and called him to free God's people. God comes to us, during our mundane tasks, within our ordinary days, and calls us by name to unexpected and extraordinary opportunities to join God in God's work. We light the candle to remind us of Christ's presence with us and God's call to us today.**

Have everyone turn to Ephesians 2 in their Bibles. Have a volunteer read Ephesians 2: 1-3.

THEME TEXT: Ephesians 2:1-3

"¹You were dead through the trespasses and sins ²in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. ³All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else."

RITUAL ACTION: Flip Flops and Holy Ground

Leader: **God says to Moses, "Take off your shoes for the ground you are standing on is holy ground." It is God's presence with Moses that makes it holy ground. There is nothing holy about Moses, in fact we see Moses himself share all the reasons he should not be set apart for this job.**

The theme text for the Gathering reminds us that left to our own devices we are all dead. We all follow the course of this world, the passions of the flesh, like everyone else. It is when God shows up, when God calls us by name, that we are changed. This change is holy, the holy work of God.

In each of our story sessions we have stopped to recognize our "holy ground moments." One member of your group should pick up the flip flop and share a response: **"How has God showed up and changed you this past year? How have you felt God working in you, causing you to change course away from the ways of the world and the passions of your flesh to live into God's call?"** Continue passing the flip flop around the circle, giving all youth a chance to respond.

God's **L O V E** Changes Everything.

Story: Woman at the Well

RETURN TO THE THEME TEXT: Ephesians 2: 4-5

"But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us⁵ even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ."

Leader: **We remember the word of God that came to us in the story of the woman at the well. Jesus crosses over all boundaries with an unconditional love that embraces all people. Jesus freely gives the water that becomes a spring gushing up to eternal life. In our baptism we are changed by God's rich mercy and great love. We remember we are marked with the cross of Christ forever, made alive together with Christ.**

BLESSING RITUAL: Reminder of Baptism

Take the water bottle and take turns blessing one another: **"Marked with the cross of Christ, God loves you forever."**

God's **G R A C E** Changes Everything.

Story: Philip and the Eunuch

RETURN TO THE THEME TEXT: Ephesians 2: 5-7

"—by grace you have been saved—⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,⁷so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

Leader: **Through the word of God encountered in the story of Philip and the Eunuch, we remember that God is always bringing about opportunities for us to experience immeasurable grace. When Philip asks if the Eunuch understands the word, he responds, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" The Spirit brings Philip and the Eunuch together to experience and bring understanding of God's grace. The Eunuch discovers there is nothing that can stop him from receiving the gift of God's grace and Philip learns that there are no limits to this gift given. God continues to bring us together to more fully experience the immeasurable riches of his grace.**

Ask: **Over the past year, how have you experienced God's grace alongside members of this group? How has someone helped you more fully understand God's gifts? Have you developed new or deepened friendships that help you to see God's presence in your life?**

God's  Changes Everything.

Story: The Road to Emmaus

THEME TEXT: Ephesians 2: 8-9

"⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—⁹not the result of works, so that no one may boast."

Leader: In the story of the friends on the road to Emmaus, we remember that the Jesus shows up when the disciples have lost hope. They have questions and concerns and Jesus walks with them. They do not recognize Jesus and he responds, "oh you of little faith," yet he stays with them until their eyes are opened and their hope renewed. This is not the result of their own works but the grace of God. They go to tell the world of God's gift.

RITUAL ACTION: QUESTIONS

Leader: The theme of the Gathering is, "*This Changes Everything.*" We read these verses about God's gift of grace, God's gift in Jesus. After spending this year reflecting on these stories how do you hear the theme: "*This Changes Everything.*" Does God's call, love, grace, hope and gift of Jesus change everything for you? We remember that the word of God does not only come to us with answers but rather to stir up within in us deep questions. What is one question you have when you hear, "*This Changes Everything?*"

Pass around the question mark giving everyone a chance to share a question.

Leader: **We bring all our questions to you God. Amen.**



Changes Everything.

Story: The Woman in the Crowd

THEME TEXT: Ephesians 2:10

“¹⁰For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.”

RITUAL ACTION: THE CLOTH

Leader: **We remember the word of God through the story of the woman in the crowd. The woman reached out and touched Jesus’ cloak and was changed by the power of Jesus. We hear the verses from our theme scripture, “we are what God has made us, created in Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.” Today we are going to pass around the cloth. As you hold the cloth, imagine reaching out to Christ and receiving his power. Jesus has the power to change us. How do you desire to be changed? What are you praying Jesus has the power to do in you?**

After everyone has shared close with this prayer:

We are what you have made us, created in Christ for good works, prepared beforehand to be our way of life. Give us the power to be the people you have made us to be. Strengthen us that through Christ we may do good works. May your call, your love, your grace, your hope, your gift of Jesus change us. Be our way of life. Amen.

IF YOU HAVE TIME:

Give each person a piece of poster board or index card to create a “pocket card.” Have them write the theme verse from Ephesians 2:8, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.”*

You may give them time to decorate their cards. Invite them to carry it in their pocket everyday between now and the Journey. The card will change (getting worn in your pocket). Will the words, through the power of Christ, change you?

These “Story Kit” resources were developed for the Northeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA, by Shivon Miller, Minister of Congregational Life at Trinity Lutheran Church in Duluth, MN. Permission is granted to use and reproduce for individual use within a congregational setting. For more resources:

www.nemnsynod.org/sj-resources.

GREAT SCRABBLE TILE COMPETITION

You have 5 minutes to see how many words you can spell using the letter tiles below. You can only use each of the tiles once in each word.



- | | | |
|----|----|----|
| 1 | 18 | 35 |
| 2 | 19 | 36 |
| 3 | 20 | 37 |
| 4 | 21 | 38 |
| 5 | 22 | 39 |
| 6 | 23 | 40 |
| 7 | 24 | 41 |
| 8 | 25 | 42 |
| 9 | 26 | 43 |
| 10 | 27 | 44 |
| 11 | 28 | 45 |
| 12 | 29 | 46 |
| 13 | 30 | 47 |
| 14 | 31 | 48 |
| 15 | 32 | 49 |
| 16 | 33 | 50 |
| 17 | 34 | |