



java club

[**level 1: house blend: radical growth**]
an interactive *storying* Bible study.

[level 1: **house blend** : *radical growth*]

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Java Club, an interactive storying Bible study. We hope that you will be able to encounter God in fresh ways as you find your place in the greatest story ever told.

This story set is just one of many sets to be produced as we seek to use the stories of God's Word to instruct, correct, and inspire. You may be asking, why stories? As a worldwide ministry, we have sought to reach the oral learners in other countries, but we have found that they are not the only ones who prefer to be taught through non-literate means. Increasingly, Western societies are shifting to a more visual and interactive approach. In addition, the advance of post-modern thought has brought us to a place where many of our traditional tools of evangelism and discipleship are no longer effective in reaching our culture. However, the power of the narrative has not disappeared. We are still captured and captivated by a good story, and there is no better story than the great epic that is our Bible. So, for this, your introduction to storying as ministry, we have chosen to look for the essentials for Christian growth- *radical growth*. It is by no means comprehensive, and neither is it meant to be. This study is intentionally designed to be flexible. Use it however you wish- as an evangelistic discovery group, as a home Bible study, as a Sunday School curriculum-- anything.

While formal training is not necessary for Bible storying, we do recommend you walk through the training material on our website, <www.thejavaclub.org>. Click on "Training," where you will find specific directions on how to use this study effectively. Also, feel free to use the audio and video recordings of each story to help you to learn them well.

Also, another hope of ours is that in discovering Bible storying, you will be exposed to how this method is being used all around the world. We pray that God would grip your heart with the power of His story, and the great need that exists to tell this story in so many places. Please take the time to pray with us that God will use this study in your hearts, and that He will make His name (and His story) known throughout every tongue and tribe. If you are interested in partnering with us to reach the world for Christ, please go to <www.thejavaclub.org/movement>. To Him be the glory!

Sincerely,

The  Team

The logo for "The Story Runners" features two stylized human figures in green and red, one slightly behind the other, appearing to be in motion. The word "Story" is written in a green, cursive font, and "Runners" is in a red, cursive font.

STORY 1: ACCEPTANCE

During Jesus' ministry, people who had bad reputations often came to listen to him teach. This made the teachers of religious law complain that he was associating with such bad people—even eating with them! So one day Jesus told them this story:

"There once was a man who had two sons. The younger son said to his Father, 'Father, I want what's coming to me now.' So the Father divided his property between the two sons.

"Well, it wasn't long before the younger son packed up everything he owned and left for a distant country, where he wasted his money living a wild lifestyle. After he spent every penny he had, there was a bad famine in the whole country and soon he had nothing to eat.

"So he went to work for a man in that country, and the man sent him out to take care of the pigs. He was so hungry he would have eaten what the pigs were eating, but no one would give him any.

"Finally, he came to his senses, and said, 'My father's workers have plenty to eat, and here I am starving to death! I'll go back and tell him, 'Father, I have disobeyed God and I have disobeyed you; I don't deserve to be called your son. Treat me like one of your workers.' So he got right up and starting making his way home.

"When he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for his rebellious son. He ran to his son, and hugged him and kissed him.

"The son started his speech, 'Father, I have disobeyed God and I have disobeyed you; I don't deserve to be called your son.'

"But the Father wasn't listening. He called to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best set of clothes and put them on him. Put the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Go get the best calf and roast it- We're going to have a feast! This son of mine was dead, but now he's come back to life! He was lost but has now he's been found!'

"And they all began to celebrate the homecoming of the rebellious son."

{optional addition for further study: verses 25-32- The Elder Son}

STORY 1: ACCEPTANCE

- **review:** re-tell the story

- **dialogue:** discuss the story
 - What do you like or not like about this story?

 - What are some evidences of the father's love and acceptance of the "lost" son?

 - Why do you think Jesus told this story?

 - What can we learn about God from this story?

- **application:** live the story
 - Why don't we always experience assurance and acceptance in our relationship with God?

 - If we were completely assured of God's love for us, how would we live? What would our lives look like?

 - What is one action you can take to apply this story to your life?

- **notes:**

STORY 2: FORGIVENESS

One day, Jesus was invited to have dinner with Simon, who was a teacher of the religious law. So Jesus went to Simon's home and sat down to eat with him.

In the town, there was a woman who was known as the village harlot, and when she learned that Jesus was at Simon's house, she got an expensive bottle of perfume and found the house. She came in and stood behind Jesus weeping, and wetting his feet with her tears. Then, she wiped his feet with her hair, kissed them, and poured her perfume on them.

When Simon saw this, he muttered to himself, "If this Jesus really was the prophet I thought he was, he would have known what kind of woman this is who is falling all over him."

Jesus said to him, "Simon, I've got something to tell you."

Simon replied, "Teacher, what is it?"

Jesus told him, "Two men were in debt to a banker. One owed five hundred silver coins and the other owed fifty. Neither of the men had the money to pay it back, so the banker decided to cancel both debts. Which of the two men will love the banker more?"

Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the biggest debt canceled."

"That's right," Jesus said. Then, turning to the woman but speaking to Simon, Jesus said, "Do you see this woman? When I came into your house, you didn't give me any water to wash my feet. But she washed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. You didn't greet me with a kiss, but from the time I came in, she hasn't stopped kissing my feet. You gave me nothing to freshen up, but she has poured perfume on my feet. So, I tell you that all her many sins have been forgiven, and that's why she has shown great love. But he who has been forgiven little, loves little."

Then Jesus said to the woman, "Your sins are forgiven."

At this, the other guests started saying to one another, "Who does he think he is, forgiving sins?"

But Jesus told the woman, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."

STORY 2: FORGIVENESS

- **review:** re-tell the story

- **dialogue:** discuss the story
 - What do you like or not like about this story?

 - What are some differences in how the religious leader viewed the sinful woman versus how Jesus viewed her?

 - Why do you think Jesus told the story about the two men with debt? What can we learn from that?

 - What do you suppose was the impact of this experience on the woman?

 - What can we learn about God from this story?

- **application:** live the story
 - Why don't we always experience the forgiveness that God offers us?

 - If we were completely assured of God's forgiveness of all of our past, present and future disobedience, how would we live? What would our lives look like?

 - What is one action you can take to apply this story to your life?

- **notes:**

STORY 3: FILLED

Simon Peter was a follower of Jesus in the first century. After Jesus was arrested, he was taken in for interrogation, and Peter followed close behind.

As Peter tried to enter the house where Jesus was being questioned, the doorkeeper asked, "Aren't you one of that man's followers?" Peter replied, "No, I'm not!"

Just a few minutes later, as Peter was standing outside warming himself at a fire, someone asked him, "Aren't you one of Jesus' followers?" Again Peter denied it and said, "No, I'm not."

Another man said, "Yeah, didn't I see you at the garden where he was taken?" Again, Peter denied it.

Just a few short weeks later, after Jesus' death and resurrection, the promised Holy Spirit came down on the believers in Jerusalem. At one point, Peter was in a public place, and he stood up and spoke in a loud and clear voice.

He said, "Fellow Jews, and all of you who are here visiting Jerusalem, listen carefully. Listen to what I have to say about Jesus of Nazareth."

He went on speak boldly about Jesus and his death and resurrection. He told the crowd that Jesus is the Messiah and that he and the other followers had all seen Jesus after the resurrection.

Peter's words pierced the hearts of many people in the crowd, and they said to him and the other believers, "Brothers, what should we do?"

Peter replied, "Each of you must repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. Then you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is to you and to your children, and for everyone our Lord God will choose, no matter where they live."

Then Peter continued preaching for a long time, strongly urging all his listeners, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation!"

And on that day, about 3,000 people believed in God for the first time.

STORY 3: FILLED

- **review:** re-tell the story

- **dialogue:** discuss the story
 - What do you like or not like about this story?

 - What changes do we see in Peter from the first part of the story to the second part?
What led to those changes?

 - What can we learn about God from this story?

- **application:** live the story
 - Why don't we always seek to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit?

 - If we were to walk in the power of Holy Spirit, what would our lives look like?

 - What is one action you can take to apply this story to your life?

- **notes:**

STORY 4: RELATIONSHIP

Jesus and his followers travelled a lot throughout Israel during his three years of ministry, and they met a lot of people.

On one occasion, they came into a village where a woman named Martha welcomed them into her home.

Martha had a sister, named Mary, who sat down in front of Jesus so she could listen to him and learn from him.

While Mary sat and listened, Martha was pulled away and distracted by all the work she had to do in the kitchen.

Later, she came in and interrupted them. She said, "Master, don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her to come and help me!"

Jesus answered her, "Martha, Martha! You are so worried and upset about all these things, but only one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her."

STORY 4: RELATIONSHIP

- **review:** re-tell the story

- **dialogue:** discuss the story
 - What do you like or not like about this story?

 - What can we learn about how to relate to God from this story?

 - In Psalm 16:8, David says that he “set the Lord continually before me.” What do you think that means and how does it relate to the story?

 - What can we learn about God from this story?

- **application:** live the story
 - Why don't we always seek to simply sit with Jesus? What keeps us from him?

 - If we were to continually walk with God in relationship, what would our lives look like?

 - What is one action you can take to apply this story to your life?

- **notes:**

STORY 5: ACTION

Josiah was eight years old when he became the king of Judah. Both his father and his grandfather had been evil kings, and had not followed the Lord. The people of Judah worshipped all kinds of idols and even sacrificed their children to these idols. Josiah, however, tried to obey God in all things.

When he was 26 years old, he sent his royal secretary to the Temple of the Lord to authorize some restorations. When he came back, he brought a book that had been found by the high priest. This book, which was the Book of God's Laws that God has given Moses, had been lost for years.

So the royal secretary read it aloud.

When Josiah heard what was written in the Book of God's Laws, he tore his clothes in despair. He called for his advisors and told them, "Go and speak to God for me and for all of Judah! Find out what we must do in response to what is written in this book that has just been found! God must be furious with me and everyone else in Judah, because we have not been following the laws in this book!"

So his advisors went to the prophetess of the Lord, and she gave them this message "The Lord, the God of Israel, has spoken! Go and tell the man who sent you this is what the Lord says: 'I will destroy this city and its people, just as I told them in the book. They have abandoned me and disobeyed my commands in the book of law. My anger burns against them. But as for Josiah, since his heart was responsive and he humbled himself before me, I have heard him. So I will let him die in peace, before I destroy this place.'"

After hearing this, Josiah called together all of the people of Judah for an assembly. There he read the entire Book of God's Laws to them.

After he finished reading, he made a promise before the people and the Lord to follow God with all of his heart and soul. Then he began to destroy all the idols in Jerusalem.

Throughout his reign as king, Josiah continued to obey the Lord. He destroyed all the idols throughout Judah and Samaria and he re-instated celebrations to the Lord that the people had neglected for hundreds of years.

STORY 5: ACTION

- **review:** re-tell the story

- **dialogue:** discuss the story
 - What do you like or not like about this story?

 - What can we learn about how to relate to God from this story?

 - The Bible says that faith without action is dead. What do you think that means and how does it relate to the story?

 - What can we learn about God from this story?

- **application:** live the story
 - Why don't we always apply what we learn from the Bible?

 - If we were to apply all of God's commands to our everyday lives, what would our lives look like?

 - What is one action you can take to apply this story to your life?

- **notes:**

STORY 6: CONVERSATION

Nehemiah was a Jewish man who lived in a city called Susa in 446 B.C. He was there because the Jewish people had been exiled from their homeland, and Nehemiah had become a servant to the Persian king.

One day, his brother and some other men came from Jerusalem and Nehemiah asked them about the situation there. They said, "The people there are in bad shape. They feel totally disgraced. The walls of Jerusalem have been broken down and the gates have been burned.

When Nehemiah heard this, he sat down and cried. For several days he prayed and mourned- he even went without food to show how sad he was.

He prayed to God, "Lord, God of heaven, You are a great and awesome God. And you faithfully keep your promises to everyone who loves you and obeys your commands. I confess that I, my family, and the rest of your people have sinned by choosing to disobey you and the laws you gave us."

He goes on to pray "Lord, I am praying for your servants--those you rescued by your great strength and mighty power. Please hear my prayer! When I serve the king his wine today, make him pleased with me and have him do what I ask. Put it in his heart to be kind to me."

So, a few months later, Nehemiah got his chance. While he was serving the king his wine, he was sad, because he was thinking of Jerusalem.

The king noticed and said, "Why do you look so sad? You're not sick. Something must be bothering you." Even though he was terrified, Nehemiah replied, "Long live the king! I feel sad because the city where my ancestors are buried is in ruins, and its gates have been burned down."

Then the king asked, "So, how can I help you?"

Nehemiah said a quick prayer to God, and asked the king, "Sir, if it's all right with you, please send me back to Judah, so that I can rebuild the city where my ancestors are buried."

The king not only agreed to send Nehemiah, but also agreed to give him letters to authorize his travel.

Nehemiah said, "God's gracious hand was upon me."

STORY 6: CONVERSATION

- **review:** re-tell the story
- **dialogue:** discuss the story
 - What do you like or not like about this story?
 - What can we learn from Nehemiah in terms of sharing our concerns with God?
 - What can we learn about God from this story?
- **application:** live the story
 - Why don't we tend to talk things through with God?
 - If we were to "pray without ceasing*," what would our lives look like?
 - What is one action you can take to apply this story to your life?
- **notes:**

*-1 Thessalonians 5:17

STORY 7: WITNESS

One day, as Jesus was passing through a village, he got tired and sat down by a well.

When a woman walked up, Jesus asked her for a drink of water. The woman responded, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews didn't associate with Samaritans.)

As their conversation continued, Jesus shared with this woman about the "living water" that he offers and taught her about worship. She had been through at least five failed relationships and Jesus knew this about her, and yet, he didn't condemn her. Instead, he chose to reveal to her his true identity as Savior.

As they were talking, Jesus' disciples arrived and they were shocked to find Jesus talking with a woman. They were all curious, but none of them asked Jesus what he wanted or why he was talking to her.

Then, leaving her water jar behind, the woman ran back into town.

She said to the people, "Come and check this out! There is a man who told me everything I have ever done! Could he be the Messiah?"

Everyone in town went out to see Jesus.

Because of what the woman told them, a lot of people in that village put their faith in Jesus. Many of them came to Jesus and urged him to stay in their village, and he stayed for two more days.

Many more people put their faith in Jesus because of what they heard him say.

They told the woman, "We no longer have faith in Jesus just because of what you told us. We have heard him ourselves, and we are certain that he is the Savior of the world!"

STORY 7: WITNESS

- **review:** re-tell the story
- **dialogue:** discuss the story
 - What do you like or not like about this story?
 - What was the woman's reaction to meeting Jesus? What was the result?
 - What can we learn from the woman in terms of sharing with others about Jesus?
 - What can we learn about God from this story?
- **application:** live the story
 - Why are some barriers to talking about Jesus with people who don't know him?
 - If we were to live our lives as a witness for Jesus, what would our lives look like?
 - What is one action you can take to apply this story to your life?
- **notes:**

STORY 8: COMMUNITY

This is a story about the first community of those who believed in Jesus in the first century. After Jesus' resurrection and ascension, God gave them His Spirit to live within them, and things began to change.

The community spent their time learning from the men who had been close friends with Jesus, men like Peter and John and James. They were like family to each other and they often prayed for each other. They ate together in each others' houses and shared their food happily and freely, praising God for whatever they had.

They were one in heart and mind. Nobody said that their stuff was theirs, but they shared everything. There were really no needy people among them. A man named Joseph sold his field and brought all the money to the apostles to give to those in need. Others even sold their homes!

Everyone around them was amazed at the miracles that God was doing through these men. It wasn't at all uncommon to see the sick and the disabled healed. Crowds of people brought their sick and those troubled by evil spirits and they were all healed. People even tried to strategically place their sick in Peter's shadow, hoping to be healed.

Almost everybody liked them, and they saw new people come to know Jesus and join their community every day.

STORY 8: COMMUNITY

- **review:** re-tell the story

- **dialogue:** discuss the story
 - What do you like or not like about this story?

 - How did the believers treat each other? How did they treat their community? What was their reputation?

 - What can we learn from this community of believers?

 - What can we learn about God from this story?

- **application:** live the story
 - Why don't we often have this kind of community with other believers?

 - If we were to have this kind of community, what would it look like?

 - What is one action you can take to apply this story to your life?

- **notes:**

STORY 9: LOVE

On one occasion, Jesus was talking to a man about love, and he told the man about how we should “love our neighbor like we love ourselves.” But the man asked, “So... just who is my ‘neighbor?’” So Jesus told him this story:

“There once was a man who was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho. On the way, he was attacked by robbers. They took his clothes, beat him up, and left him for dead.

“Luckily, a priest happened to be travelling down that same road a little later. But when he saw the man who had been beaten up, he walked on by on the other side of the road.

“Later, another worker in the temple came down the road, and he too passed by the man.

“After that, a man from a despised area came travelling along. When he saw the man, he felt sorry for him and went over to him. He did what he could to disinfect and bandage the man’s wounds, and he lifted him up on his donkey and took him to the nearest inn. At the inn, he took care of this man and stayed with him through the night.

“The next day, he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, ‘Take good care of him. If it costs any more, put it on my bill—I’ll pay you on my way back.’”

Then Jesus asked the man, “Which one of these three do you think became a neighbor to the one who was attacked and robbed?”

“The one who treated him kindly,” said the man.

So Jesus told him, “Go, and do the same!”

STORY 9: LOVE

- **review:** re-tell the story

- **dialogue:** discuss the story
 - What do you like or not like about this story?

 - Why do you think Jesus told this story?

 - In John 13:34-35, Jesus says that the world will know we are Christians by our love. How does that relate to this story?

 - What can we learn about God from this story?

- **application:** live the story
 - Why don't we always love our neighbors well?

 - If we were to love without abandon, what would our lives look like?

 - What is one action you can take to apply this story to your life?

- **notes:**

STORY 10: SPREAD

As the number of Jesus' followers continued to grow, a great wave of persecution began, which forced many of them to move out of Jerusalem. They scattered to other towns and cities and told people the good news about Jesus everywhere they went. One of these was a guy named Philip, who was well-respected and he was full of God's Spirit. Philip went to a town north of Jerusalem and began teaching the people there about Jesus. Because of his teaching, many men and women decided to follow Jesus.

One day an angel from God came to Philip and said, "Philip, I want you to go down to the desert road, that one that goes south from Jerusalem."

So Philip got up, left the town and set off on this journey. After a while, as he was walking along the road, he saw a chariot approaching. In the chariot was a government official from Ethiopia, who worked for the Queen; he had just been to Jerusalem to worship, and was on his way back home. God's Spirit said to Philip, "Run up to that chariot!"

So Philip ran up to the chariot, and as he got close he heard the guy reading out loud from the book of one of God's prophets, Isaiah. He heard him reading, "He was led like a lamb to be slaughtered, but he didn't say a word. He was humiliated and treated unfairly. He didn't even have any descendants, because his life was taken away."

When Philip heard that, he called out to the man, "Do you understand what you're reading?"

And the guy said, "How can I, unless someone explains it to me?" And so he invited Philip to come up and sit with him in the chariot.

The man asked Philip, "Is Isaiah talking about himself here, or someone else?" Then beginning with that passage, Philip explained the good news of Jesus.

Soon they came to some water by the side of the road. The Ethiopian saw it and said, "Hey, why don't we stop here so I can be baptized*!" So he stopped the chariot, and the two of them got out, walked down to the water, and Philip baptized him right then and there. When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away. The Ethiopian never saw him again, but he went on his way rejoicing.

**Note: Before telling this story, you want to be sure that your audience understands the concept of baptism. For example, you could say, "In this story, the Ethiopian man asked to be baptized. Baptism was/is seen as an outward sign of an inward change, an act of obedience to signify new life."*

STORY 10: SPREAD

- **review:** re-tell the story

- **dialogue:** discuss the story
 - What do you like or not like about this story?

 - Why does Phillip share with this man? What can we learn from the way in which he shared?

 - What can we learn about God from this story?

- **application:** live the story
 - God calls each of to play a part in the spreading of His story. What part do you feel like He has called you to play?

 - What keeps us from spreading God's story here and around the world?

 - If every Christian were to commit to being a vital part of fulfilling the spread of God's story, what would it look like? What would our lives look like?

 - What is one action you can take to apply this story to your life?

- **notes:**

STORY 11: DISCIPLE

While Jesus was on earth, he taught a lot of people about God and His Kingdom. Crowds followed him wherever he went.

But one day, as he had just started his ministry, Jesus was near Lake Galilee and he saw two brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew. They were fishermen, and they were casting their net into the lake.

Jesus said to them, "Come with me! I will teach you how to bring in people instead of fish."

Immediately, the two brothers dropped their nets and went with him.

Jesus walked on until he saw James and John, the sons of a guy named Zebedee. They were in a boat with their father, preparing their nets. Jesus asked them to come with him too. And immediately, they left the boat and their father and went with Jesus.

On another occasion, Jesus was walking through a village and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting in his tax booth.

Jesus simply looked at him and said, "Follow me." Levi got up, left everything and followed Jesus.

Eventually, Jesus rounded up twelve very common, uneducated guys to be his closest followers. He spent almost all of his time teaching and training them, and then after he was gone, these same guys continued, teaching and training others.

STORY 11: DISCIPLE

- **review:** re-tell the story
- **dialogue:** discuss the story
 - What do you like or not like about this story?
 - What does this story teach about Jesus' method of ministry?
 - What can we learn about God from this story?
- **application:** live the story
 - Why don't we always take what we have learned and teach it to others?
 - If every Christian were to multiply themselves by investing in others, what would it look like in our lives?
 - What is one action you can take to apply this story to your life?
- **notes:**

STORY 12: GO

Jesus' last words on earth to his followers were to go and spread his message to all nations.

Though the early Christians were beaten up and ridiculed for their faith, they kept on spreading out and sharing the good news about Jesus.

Some men went to a city called Antioch and began to preach and teach about Jesus. The Lord's hand was with them, and huge numbers of people believed in Jesus for the first time.

Soon, the church in Jerusalem heard about what was happening in Antioch and they sent a guy named Barnabas. When he arrived and saw what was happening, he was full of joy and he encouraged them to remain true to the Lord with all of their hearts.

Then Barnabas traveled to Tarsus to find a brother named Saul. Saul, who was later called Paul, returned to Antioch with Barnabas and there they began to meet with the church and teach them more about Jesus.

Later, while they were worshiping the Lord and going without eating, the Holy Spirit told them, "Appoint Barnabas and Saul to do the work for which I have chosen them."

After the believers spent some more time praying and going without food, they placed their hands on Barnabas and Saul to show that they had been selected to do this work. Then they sent them on their way to go and share the good news of Jesus with the world.

STORY 12: GO

- **review:** re-tell the story
- **dialogue:** discuss the story
 - What do you like or not like about this story?
 - What can we learn from the believers in Antioch?
 - What leads them to send Barnabas and Saul to other places? Is there no longer work to be done in Antioch?
 - What can we learn about God from this story?
- **application:** live the story
 - One of God's first commands to man was to scatter and fill the earth. Jesus' last words were to "go and make disciples of all nations." And yet, so many places in the world have no Christian presence at all. What keeps us from going?
 - What is one action you can take to apply this story to your life?
- **notes:**



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