

Stories for the Foundations Discipleship Lessons

Lesson One

Story on sin and our need for God – Harriet Tubman

Harriet Tubman was a devout Christian that God used to help dozens of men and women find freedom from slavery in the mid-1800s. Born into slavery herself in Maryland, Tubman was beaten and whipped by her various owners as a child. When she was 29, she escaped from captivity. Soon after that, she returned to Maryland to rescue her family. Slowly, one group at a time, she brought relatives with her out of the state, and eventually made thirteen missions to rescue over seventy slaves using a network of safe, antislavery houses known as the Underground Railroad. Harriet would engage slaves in the fields inviting them to follow her and offering them a chance at freedom. Unfortunately, many of the slaves were not interested in leaving. Some of the slaves that had kind masters were comfortable with their lives and were too afraid to risk getting caught.

At the end of her life, as she reflected on her experience with the Underground railroad, Harriet Tubman was quoted as saying, "I could have saved more slaves, if I could have convinced them they were slaves." Experiencing the freedom that we can find through Jesus begins with recognizing that you are enslaved to sin and that there is something better.

Lesson Two

Story on grace #1 – Story of Two Brothers

There were two brothers who were identical twins. On the outside they were identical, but on the inside they were very different. The first brother was very good and honest, and when he grew up he became a judge. The second brother was evil and sinful, and when he grew up he became a criminal.

One day, the evil brother committed a crime that was punishable by the death penalty. He was arrested and put in jail until the day he was to appear in court. On that day, he walked into the courtroom and saw that his brother was the judge sitting at the bench. He thought, "Yes! I'm going to be okay! I'll probably still be prosecuted but at least I won't get the death penalty, even though that's what I deserve." At the end of his trial, however, the jury found him guilty and his brother sentenced him to death in three days time. As they were taking him out of the courtroom he was thinking, "I can't believe my brother did that to me! Why did he do that?"

He sat alone in jail for two days, desperate because he knew his life was going to end. The good brother came to the jail to visit him on the second day and proposed a plan. He said, "Let's exchange clothes with each other, and then you can walk out of here free. I'll take your place...it'll all work out in the end." The evil brother thought it was a great idea, so they traded clothes and the evil brother left while the good brother stayed in his place.

The next morning at six o'clock, the evil brother came back to the jail, curious to see what would happen to his brother. He climbed on top of a wall so he could see when they brought his brother out. As he peeked over the wall to see what was going on, he heard a volley of shots, and his good brother fell to the ground dead. The evil brother fled in shock, and eventually found his way to his brother's house. He went inside and he found a letter on the desk, addressed to him. It read:

Brother,

You committed a crime, so someone must die. I love you, so I took your place. From now on, please live a different life. This is a picture of what Jesus did for us when he took our sin onto himself.

This is a picture of grace.

Story on grace #2 – The Miracle of Grace (taken from *The Gospel for Real Life* by Jerry Bridges, pg. 111)

I once read a story about two men who happened to be kneeling side by side at the communion rail of an English church. One was a former convict who had served time and was now out of prison. The other was the judge who had sentenced him to prison years before.

After the service the minister asked the judge, "Did you recognize the man kneeling beside you?"

"Yes I did," replied the judge. "That was a miracle of grace."

"You mean that a man you sentenced to prison should be kneeling beside you?"

"No, not at all," said the judge. "The miracle is that I should be kneeling beside him. You see, that man knew clearly he was a sinner in need of a Savior. But I was brought up in a religious home, have lived a decent, moral life, and have served my community. It is much more difficult for someone such as I to recognize his need for a Savior. I am the miracle of grace."

Lesson Three

Personal testimony on when and how you started spending time with God

Share your experience in spending time with God; when you started, what you do, encouraging ways that God has used prayer, the Bible and devotions in your life.

Story on the power of prayer - 16 Guards

During the Mau Mau uprising in Kenya in 1960, missionaries Matt & Lora Higgens were returning to Nairobi one night through the heart of Mau Mau territory, where Kenyans and missionaries alike had been killed and dismembered. Seventeen miles outside of Nairobi, their Land Rover broke down and Higgens tried to repair the car in the dark, but could not get it started. They spent the night in the car and prayed Psalm 4:8 over and over, "I will lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety." In the morning light, they were able to repair the car.

A few weeks later, the Higgenses returned to America on furlough. They reported that on the night before they left Nairobi, a local pastor had visited them and told them of a visit from a local Mau Mau member. The man said that he and three others had crept up to the car to kill the Higgenses, but left in fear when they saw the sixteen men surrounding the car. "Sixteen men?" Higgens asked, "I don't know what you mean!"

While they were on furlough, a friend of the Higgenses named Clay Brent asked them if they had been in danger recently. Higgens asked him why; Clay said that on March 23, God had placed a heavy burden on his heart. He called the men of the church to pray together until they felt the burden lift. The Higgenses asked, "How many men were at the prayer meeting?" Clay responded, "Sixteen."

-Touch the World through Prayer, 1986

Lesson Four

Story on surrender – Jim Elliot

In the last weeks of 1955, Jim Elliot along with four other men made contact with tribal Indians in the jungles of Ecuador. Their intention was to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to this people, known at the time as the Aucas, who had never heard it. They built a camp on the edge of a river a short distance from the Indian camp. After several very promising encounters with them, the Aucas warriors turned on the missionaries, attacked them, speared them and killed them.

Years later his wife Elizabeth published excerpts from his journals in the book, Shadow of the Almighty. It records a statement from Jim's college years when he was making the decision to surrender his life to follow Christ even unto death. It serves as a mantra today for all of those that would live wholeheartedly for God. Jim wrote, "He is no fool, who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."

Story on love – Elizabeth Elliot, Rachel Saint

The death of the 5 missionaries in Ecuador received world-wide attention after a ten page cover article in Life magazine. Many were outraged. The families were obviously devastated. Anyone would have understood if they would have returned home to rebuild their lives. However, a love and compassion for these people, the Aucas, who did not yet know Jesus remained in many of their hearts.

In the summer of 1958, Rachel Saint, sister of Nate Saint, one of the missionaries along with Elizabeth Elliot, wife of Jim Elliot, returned to the jungle to again attempt to make contact with the very Aucan Indians who had killed their loved ones. The women were received by the tribe and began to share the good news about Jesus Christ. One by one the Indians began to accept Christ and, in the months that followed, the tribal warfare that had characterized this people had all but ceased. The love and forgiveness of Rachel Saint and Elizabeth Elliot for those they could have easily considered their enemies opened the door for an entire people to come to hear and see the saving love and forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

Lesson Five

Story on the need for a Father – Newspaper add for Paco

Ernest Hemmingway told a story of a young Spanish man named Paco who left his father to live a life of sin in the capital city, Madrid. After several months and fearing the worst for his son, the father went to Madrid in search of Paco. He took out an advertisement in the newspaper, which said, "Paco meet me at Hotel Montana noon Tuesday. All is forgiven. Papa." The next Tuesday the father went to the hotel hoping to find his son waiting for him. When he turned the corner and the hotel came in view, he saw a great crowd of 800 men gathered around the hotel. They were all are named Paco. There is something in all of us that needs the love and acceptance of a father.

Story on God's provision – George Mueller

George Mueller was pastor in England for 66 years in the 1800s. He is most well known for the orphan ministry he began. He built 5 large orphan houses and cared and provided for over 10,000 orphans in his lifetime. Before he began his work, there were only accommodations for 3000 orphans in all of England. Fifty years after his death, there was space for over 10,000 orphans. It is estimated that during his lifetime, George Mueller collected more than \$150 million (in today's currency) for the orphans. And according to his testimony and that of others, he never asked anyone directly for money except God. When asked why he did this, Mueller replied, "The gifts have been given to me without one single individual having been asked by me for anything. The reason why I have refrained altogether from soliciting anyone for help is that the hand of God might be seen in the matter, that my fellow believers might be encouraged more and more to trust in Him and that also those who do not know the Lord have fresh proof that, indeed, it is not a vain thing to pray to God." George Mueller's life is a powerful encouragement to us that we can trust God to provide for us.

Story on God's love – Yellow Ribbon story

A rebellious young man who wasted his youth in vice and crime finally came to himself and longed to return home to his father. He remembered how he had bitterly offended, mocked, and even cursed his father several times over when he was with him. So he wasn't sure whether or not his dad

would want him back. But he remembered his dad's favorite song, "Tie a Yellow Ribbon" which part of it goes, "Oh, tie a yellow ribbon 'round the old oak tree, it's been three long years, do you still want me? If I don't see a yellow ribbon 'round the old oak tree, I'll stay on the bus, forget about us and put the blame on me..." And so he wrote, "Dad, I've have terribly wronged you. But I miss you and I want to come home. I'm not sure whether you still have a place for me in your heart. Just like your favorite song, would you tie a yellow ribbon around the tree in front of your house, if you still want me home?"

While on the bus ride home, he anxiously wondered if his dad got the letter, and if he did, whether there would be a yellow ribbon tied around the tree. When he reached the house, he couldn't believe his eyes! Everything was in yellow — the roof, the walls, the fence, the gate. Even the clotheslines were filled with yellow towels and blankets. He got off the bus and when he opened the gate, huge yellow sunflowers greeted him. There was no doubt in his mind how much his dad wanted him back.

Lesson Six

Personal testimony on experiencing the presence of God

Share an experience where you knew that God was real and with you. This could be at salvation or later in your life.

Story on Abiding in God—Brother Lawrence

Brother Lawrence served as a cook in a French monastery in the 17th century. He was a simple, uneducated man who devoted his life to practicing the presence of God every moment, every day. He sought to make continual conversation with God even among the ordinary and routine duties of life. His simple life brought him unsolicited attention. Men, women and children would travel from around the country to watch him in his kitchen cooking and talking with God. In his book, entitled Practicing the Presence of God, he summed his devotion to abiding with God in these words: "There is not in the world a life more sweet and delightful than that of a continual conversation with God."

Lesson Seven

Story on our need for community and acceptance

A few years ago, Tony Campolo spoke at a conference in Hawaii. One night, his internal clock awoke him at 3:00 a.m. with his stomach is growling. He got up and went looking for a place to get an early breakfast. He went into a grungy dive, and, as he sat there, in walked eight or nine prostitutes. He gulped his coffee, planning to make a quick getaway. As he was about to get up, the woman next to him said to her friend, "You know what? Tomorrow's my birthday. I'm gonna be 39." Her friend nastily replied, "So what d'ya want from me? A birthday party?" The first woman said, "I'm just sayin' it's my birthday. I don't want anything from you. I mean, why should I have a birthday party? I've never had a birthday party in my whole life. Why should I have one now?" Well, when Tony heard that, he said he made a decision. He sat and waited until the women left, and then asked Harry, the guy at the counter, "Do they come in here every night? Because the one next to me just said that tomorrow is her birthday. Do you think we could maybe throw a little birthday party for her right here in the diner?" "That's great," he said. "Yeah, I like it." So they made their plans.

At 2:30 the next morning, Tony went back. They decorated the place from one end to the other. At 3:30 on the dot, the door swung open and in walked Agnes. They all shouted "Happy Birthday, Agnes!" Agnes was stunned, her mouth fell open, her knees started to buckle, and she almost toppled over.

After the cake, Tony asked to pray for Agnes, for her life, her health, and her salvation. When he finished, Harry leaned over, and, with a trace of hostility in his voice, said, "Hey, you never told me you was a preacher. What kind of church do you belong to anyway?" Tony answered him quietly, "I belong to a church that throws birthday parties for prostitutes at 3:30 in the morning." Harry thought for a moment, and in a mocking way said, "No you don't. There ain't no church like that. If there was, I'd join it. Yep, I'd join a church like that."

Personal testimony on what the church has meant in your life

Share your earliest memories of church (involvement, impressions, misconceptions) and how your view of the church has changed through the years.

Personal testimony on being blessed by the joy of giving

Share some of your experiences in regards to giving and the blessing seen through it.

Lesson Eight

Personal testimony on the impact of life on life evangelism and discipleship

Share about the person who led you to the Lord and/or someone who had major impact on your life personally.