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WELCOME TO "THIS STORY IS ME" COMMUNITY GROUP SERIES! WE ARE EXCITED FOR WHAT GOD WILL DO IN YOUR GROUP OVER THE NEXT SIX WEEKS. OUR PRAYER IS THAT ALL OF US WILL BEGIN TO SEE OUR LIVES IN THE PARABLES OF JESUS, ALLOWING US TO KNOW CHRIST AND WALK WITH HIM IN A DEEPER WAY.

THE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ARE MEANT TO GUIDE PEOPLE INTO DEEPER RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD AND WITH ONE ANOTHER. **DURING THESE TIMES, PLEASE CONSIDER BREAKING INTO SMALLER GROUPS.** SOMETIMES IN A BIGGER GROUP, PEOPLE CAN EASILY OPT OUT OF THE DISCUSSION. SMALLER GROUPS CAN PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUR GROUP MEMBERS TO BE HONEST AND GO DEEPER WITH ONE ANOTHER.

AS THE GROUP HOST, PLEASE TAKE SOME TIME TO FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH THE CONTENTS OF THIS KIT. THIS INCLUDES PREVIEWING THE VIDEOS PRIOR TO YOUR GROUP MEETING AND READING THROUGH THE HOST'S GUIDE IN ORDER TO BE PREPARED FOR COMMUNITY GROUP. **PLEASE NOTE THERE ARE GROUP PARTICIPANT CARDS TO PASS OUT EACH WEEK.**

I BELIEVE THAT GOD WILL DO GREAT THINGS OVER THE NEXT SIX WEEKS IN YOUR GROUP. PLEASE PRAY WITH ME! GOD WILL MEET YOU AT YOUR LEVEL OF EXPECTATION!

YOUR FRIEND AND SERVANT,

JUSTIN + CHRISY KENDRICK  
CITY CHURCH

## WELCOME TO THIS STORY IS ME!

*"His disciples came and asked him, 'Why do you use parables when you talk to the people?' He replied, 'You are permitted to understand the secrets of the Kingdom of Heaven, but others are not. To those who listen to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge.'"*

*Matthew 13: 10-12a*

We are so excited that you have taken this next step to host a CityChurch Community Group for the next 6 weeks. God has put a burden and desire on our hearts to see people living in authentic Christian community across New England, and community groups are the best way for us to see this dream come to life. Each week, CityChurch Community Groups gather in people's homes to talk about Jesus and encourage each other in their relationship with Him. Lives are transformed through these groups, and we are thrilled that you are joining us in this mission!

"This Story Is Me" will help us to see our lives within the parables of Jesus Christ. These stories challenge us to examine the condition of our hearts, to look closely at our perspective of God, and discover the true path to relationship with the Father. We will find the way to true forgiveness, and see Jesus as the greatest Treasure of all.

For the next six weeks, you and your group will be meeting weekly to watch a short video teaching by Lead Pastor Justin Kendrick, and will all participate in discussion using our application questions found in this Host Book. Before your group meeting, we strongly encourage you to preview the video teaching and read over the application questions. This will help you to familiarize yourself with the content and be best prepared for your group.

Again, we are so excited to partner with you in this campaign! The entire staff at CityChurch is praying for your group. We cannot wait to hear stories of God expanding your faith over the next 6 weeks! God Bless!

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## **WEEK 1 APPLICATION:**

### **THE PARABLE OF THE SOWER**

**MATTHEW 13:1-9, 18-23**

In this parable, we see the key variable for a fruitful Christian life is the condition of a person's heart. We are invited to examine our hearts and see which of the three types of 'soil' (or heart condition) we find in ourselves.

You may want to provide some quiet worship music for question #3. During this time, you will be seeking the Lord as a group in response to the discussion time.

**1. What one truth or principle from the video really caught your attention?**

**2. In the Parable of the Sower, we see several types of soil or heart conditions. Each type of soil responds to God's truth differently. Today we are going to honestly assess the condition of the soil of our hearts. It's important to remember, our hearts may be a mix of these soil types at various times of our lives.**

**Break into groups of 2-4, and discuss the following statements and questions. Encourage group members to jot down what God shows them as they discuss the questions. Later, there will be a time to respond together and pray.**

a.) soft heart vs. hard heart: Can you remember times in your life when circumstances were difficult? What impact did these times have on your emotions? Did you find your heart growing hard because of your experience?

b.) shallow faith vs. deep faith: Faith can be exciting until challenges make us uncomfortable. Have you ever been afraid to take a step of faith, that is, make a change in your life? Can you think of a time when you have expressed your faith for God with action?

c.) focused life vs. cluttered life: Consider what clutters your life. Do you often find yourself too busy for God? Can you think of one or two changes that would make more room for God in your life?

### 3. Read aloud Hosea 10:12 (ESV)

“Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap steadfast love; break up your fallow ground, for it is the time to seek the Lord, that He may come and rain righteousness upon you.”

This verse speaks of fallow ground that was once fruitful and is now hard and unresponsive to the seed that is sown. Let's take some time to pray together. Ask God to begin showing you the condition of your heart. How would you like your heart to change? Then, answer this question: what steps do you need to take to participate with God in these changes?

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WEEK 1 NOTES:



## **WEEK 2 APPLICATION:**

### THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON

#### LUKE 15:11-32

This week we will hear a story Jesus told about a Father with two sons. In the story, God reveals two paths many of us take in our spiritual journeys.

Question #5 is geared towards those who have not yet made a commitment to Christ. You will have the opportunity to pray for some group members to give their lives to Christ based solely on the righteousness that comes by faith in Jesus. Please take some time before the group meets to pray and prepare for this. Then, be ready! It's an incredible honor to lead others to Christ. After finishing the prayer outlined in #5, take time to connect with those who have given their lives to Jesus during the group.

**1. From last week's video: Briefly share any ways you noticed the 'soil of your heart' responding differently to God based on what we learned and discussed last week.**

**2. In this story, the younger son embraces the path of self-discovery. This path is one of living by your own standards and finding the way that makes you happy. The story reveals that self-discovery without God leads to emptiness. Can you think of a time when you did things your way and came up empty?**

**3. In this story, the older son was a rule follower who wanted his works to earn him favor with his father. This can be described as moral conformity or doing works to please God. Often people think that God will accept them because they are a “good person”. Have you ever felt that way? Do you constantly feel like you need to earn God’s love? What type of life does that produce?**

**4. CG Host:** *Please follow God's leading as you give people a chance to respond to the Gospel. Here's an idea of how to navigate the closing prayer time.*

**We learned from the video that the only path to God is to humbly turn from self and stop trying to earn God’s love. Instead, we must freely receive the love of the Father given to us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Perhaps you’ve never known the love of the Father in this way. If so, then, today is your day to turn towards God by placing your faith in Jesus. Let’s close our eyes, please pray after me.**

*Heavenly Father, I turn away from living my life on my terms. I turn away from trying to earn your love by doing good deeds. Instead, I accept what Jesus accomplished by His holy & sinless life, His death on the cross and His resurrection. I confess my need for forgiveness and receive that forgiveness by placing my faith in Jesus. Holy Spirit, come and live in my heart, give me the power to live for You. Thank you, Father, that this is a new day for me. I believe in You. I trust in You. Amen.*

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**WEEK 2 NOTES:**

## **WEEK 3 APPLICATION:**

### THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

#### **MATTHEW 25:14-30**

In this week's parable, Jesus tells a story about a Master entrusting His servants with differing amounts of money. We see the various ways each servant handled the resources given to him and the Master's responses to their ways.

- 1. *From last week's video:* Would anyone like to briefly share how you allowed God to love you on His terms after hearing last week's teaching? How did you leave the paths of self-discovery or moral conformity and freely receive God's love?**
  
- 2. After hearing this week's teaching, what do you think your unique gifts and talents are? How do you use these gifts in your everyday life?**
  
- 3. Many people get caught in the trap of comparing themselves to others. This can make us feel envious of others or overly proud of ourselves. Do you ever find yourself stuck in comparison? How does that leave you feeling? What's one area in your life that you'd like to stop comparing yourself to others?**

4. Justin talked about 'in the meantime' or waiting for a promise from God to be fulfilled. Have you ever experienced this? Briefly share how this experience affected you. What is one thing from today's teaching that you would like to apply next time you find yourself 'in the meantime'?

5. In this parable, the servant with one talent misunderstood the nature of the Master. He viewed Him as unjust and mean. How do you relate to this faulty perspective of God? Break into pairs and pray for one another. Ask God to show each of you His love towards you.

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**WEEK 3 NOTES:**

## **WEEK 4 APPLICATION:**

### THE PARABLE OF THE UNFORGIVING SERVANT

#### **MATTHEW 18:21-35**

This week's parable focuses on the importance of forgiving others from your heart. As we dive into the topic of forgiveness, it might be prudent to break into smaller groups for the discussion. This will encourage all group members to participate and share more openly with each other. Please be sure you distribute application cards and pens, as they will be needed for question #4.

**1. From last week's video: This past week how did you use your gifts and talents for the good of others?**

**2. In your upbringing, how were the 'scales of justice' handled? Were you raised to quickly forgive or be easily offended and hold a grudge? How does this parable impact that pattern of living?**

### **3. Read this verse from the Bible:**

*"But if we confess our sins to Him, He can be depended on to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong. And it is perfectly proper for God to do this for us because Christ died to wash away our sins." 1 John 1:9 (TLB)*

**What is your first response after you failed or made a mistake? Do you struggle to turn to God for forgiveness? What would your life look like if you embraced the truth of this verse? That is, turned to God, confessed your sin and believed in His forgiveness.**

***4. The degree that we have experienced God's forgiveness will be seen in our willingness to forgive others.***

**During Justin's talk, he asked everyone to close their eyes and see those who are the hardest to forgive. Who were the people you saw in your mind? Use the application card that was passed out to jot down what God has shown you. Take a few minutes with this question: Am I willing to release my right to be offended?**

**After this, pray together in your small group to forgive and release those who have come to mind.**



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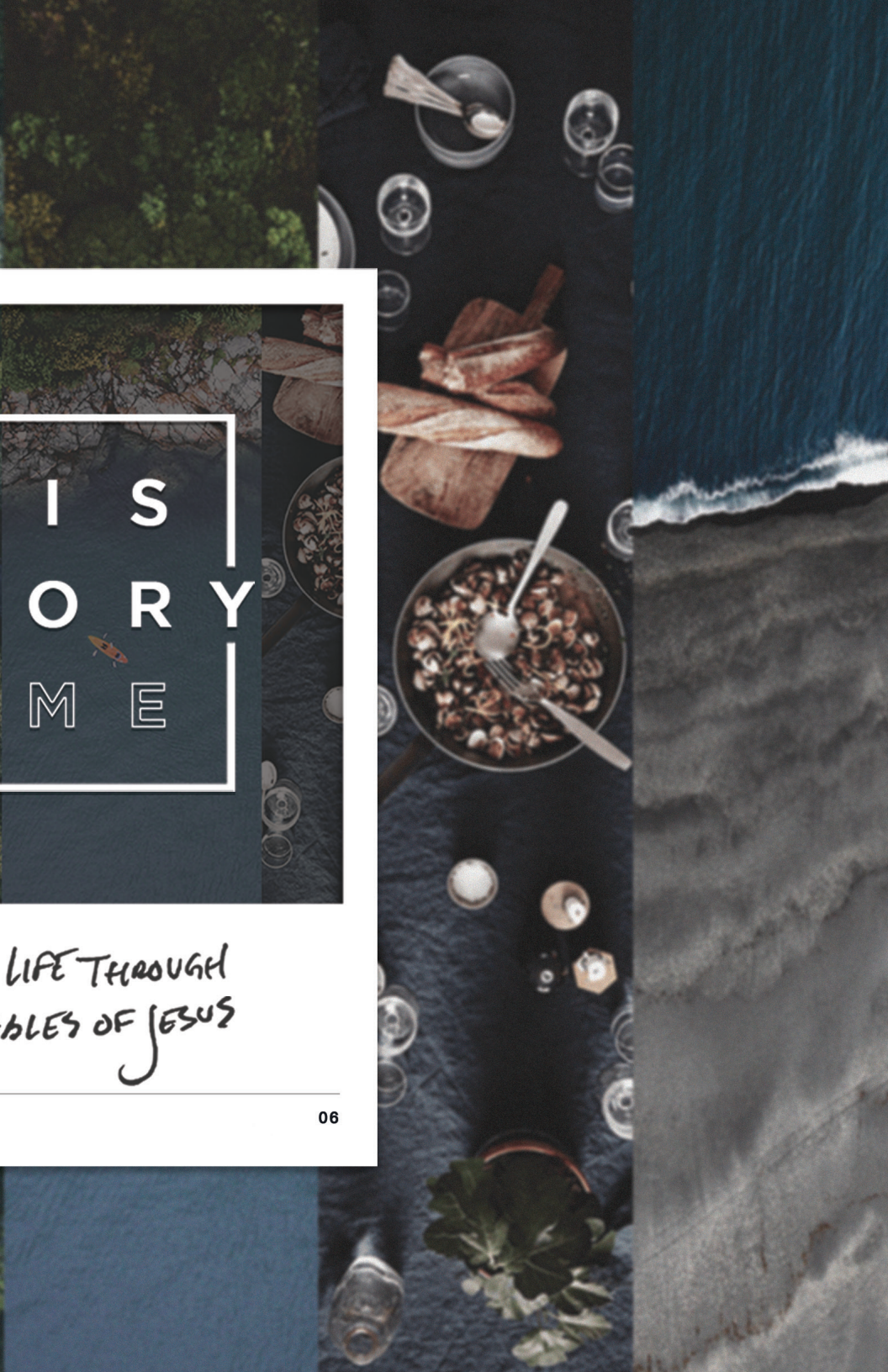
WEEK 4 NOTES:



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## **WEEK 5 APPLICATION:**

### THE PARABLE OF THE TREASURE

#### **MATTHEW 13:44-46**

The parable this week challenges us to make Jesus the absolute center of our lives. As CG Host, you know your group the best. Are there still members who have not committed their lives to Christ? You will have the opportunity this week to lead them to Christ. Be ready for this incredible opportunity!

- 1. From last week's video: Share any change you experienced this past week in the area of forgiveness.**
- 2. Is there one concept or principle from Justin's talk that really stood out to you? Briefly share what it was and why.**
- 3. We learned that the treasure in this parable is Jesus; it's knowing Him and surrendering our hearts fully to Him. Often in life, things compete with God for our hearts. What issues do you think people struggle with in this area? Which of these do you struggle with most? Least?**
- 4. How do you prioritize your life? Consider things like money, time, energy, relationships, etc. After hearing this week's parable, is there any area that you sense a need for change? Why do you think this? What are one or two steps you can take this week to move towards that change?**

**5. CG Host: if you sense there are those in the group who have not yet committed their lives to Christ, take some time and present the opportunity for them to respond to the Gospel. Read through the following paragraphs and be ready to share this from your heart.**

**Take a few moments and consider this question:  
Do I live as if Jesus is the Supreme Treasure?  
If not, consider turning your heart towards Him today.  
Jesus came to earth, lived a perfect life and paid our penalty for sin as He died on the cross. He rose again that we might receive a new life. Today, will you turn away from living for yourself, turn to Jesus and receive the greatest Treasure of all – a relationship with God? Let's all take a moment, bow our heads and then we will pray.**

*God, I recognize that up until now I have lived my life for myself. I am sorry for my sins and I see my need for forgiveness. I recognize what Jesus has done for me through His life, death and resurrection. I turn away from my sin and turn towards You. I receive Your forgiveness and Your offer of new life found in Jesus. Holy Spirit, come live within me and give me the power to live for You. I thank you God that today is a new day. I believe in You and I trust in You. Amen.*

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**WEEK 5 NOTES:**

## **WEEK 6 APPLICATION:**

### THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT BANQUET

#### LUKE 14:15-24

This week's story focuses on the truth that there is still room in the heart of God for people. His desire is that we partner with Him in urging, even compelling people to come to know Him through faith in Christ. After your discussion questions, you will take some time as a group to plan a dinner where you will invite friends and loved ones who are far from Christ. The goal is to show the love of God to others through action. Question #4 will help you plan.

**1. Briefly share any changes in your life priorities based on last week's teaching & discussion.**

**2. Sometimes in life, we can take 'good things' and make them a substitute for loving God. In what areas of your life are you tempted to do this?**

### **3. As a believer, what keeps you from freely sharing Christ with others? Is it fear, apathy, busyness, insecurity or something else?**

*In pairs, pray together and ask God for the boldness to overcome this.*

### **4. The Great Banquet: Community Group Style!** **Together we are going to plan a time to invite neighbors, co-workers, friends & family to our group. This time will consist of a shared meal, perhaps some games – but mostly, just a time to spend with those in our world who might not walk into church but will come to a dinner.**

*- As a group, we need to plan: the date/time, location, food arrangements (potluck, themed dinner, cookout, etc?) Remember this is a group effort - we need everyone to participate!*

*- Next, we need to decide who we will each invite. Take a moment and ask God to show you the people you should invite.*

*- Now, let's take some time and fill out our invitations with the dinner details and the names of who we are inviting.*

*- Last, let's pray for every single name on the invites! Also, receive courage and boldness to compel your friends to come.*



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**WEEK 6 NOTES:**





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**ADDITIONAL NOTES:**



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**ADDITIONAL NOTES:**



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**ADDITIONAL NOTES:**





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**ADDITIONAL NOTES:**







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