



Enter the Story

Jesus' Followers

A narrative about Jesus' love and acceptance for those who are messy and those in the margins.

THE BIBLE

Mark 1-2, Luke 1, 7, 19

Prepare for the Story

ICEBREAKER

- Everyone has some scars. Tell a story about one of your scars.

Rewind the Story

Can someone highlight what has happened in the story so far ...

- Time Between Times – 400 years of silence.
- Birth of Jesus – The birth of the promised King.
- Baptism & Temptation – Jesus in the Wilderness

Hear the Story

Scene One: Come Follow Me!

Not long after His time in the wilderness, Jesus began sharing a message of hope, saying, *"The kingdom of God is here! Turn from your ways and live in God's ways!"*

This was the beginning of Jesus' life as a rabbi - a wise teacher of God's ways. Rabbis were highly respected by the Jews for their knowledge of the scriptures and right living.

As Jesus walked along the seashore, he saw some fishermen fixing their nets. Jesus called to them, *"Come and follow me!"* To have a rabbi ask you to be one of his close followers – called a disciple – was a huge honor.

So these fishermen left their businesses and everything they had to be with Jesus. They became His followers and were known as His disciples. They traveled with Jesus as He showed them how to live in God's ways.

Scene Two: Healing a Leper

On one occasion, while Jesus was walking with His disciples, a man who had leprosy came and knelt in front of Him. Leprosy was a painful skin disease, and anyone who had it was feared to be contagious and was seen as "unclean." People with leprosy were forced to live in camps on the margins of society.

The man said to Jesus, *"If you're willing, you can heal me and make me clean."*

Jesus was so moved with compassion that He reached out his hand and touched the man. In that day, no one would touch a person with leprosy for fear of catching the disease – that's why Jewish law prohibited it.

Jesus said to the man, *"I am willing ... be healed."*

Instantly, the man's leprosy disappeared!

Jesus knew the Jewish law, so He told the man, *"Don't tell anyone about this. To be accepted, you must bring a special offering to the high priest and show him that you've been healed. Then everyone will know you've been cleansed."*

Jesus' instructions would allow the man to be welcomed back into Jewish society. But the man was too excited about being healed, so he immediately began telling everyone he saw what Jesus had done!

When the word spread about Jesus, large crowds started surrounding Him everywhere He went. Jesus tried to enter towns secretly, but people would find out where He was and swarm Him.

Scene Three: Eating with Sinners

One day, Jesus walked by Matthew, a tax collector, sitting at his collection booth. In those days, tax collectors were hated because they overcharged people on top of the already unreasonable Roman taxes, and they took money for themselves.

But when Jesus called out to Matthew, *“Come and follow me!”* Matthew left his job and wealth to follow Jesus.

Later, Matthew invited Jesus and His disciples over for dinner. Others were invited who were known to be either immoral or criminal ... there were many people like this who were Jesus’ followers.

When some of the religious leaders – called Pharisees - saw Jesus eating with these people, they were outraged. The Pharisees lived by a set of strict rules on top of the Jewish laws. Their rules prohibited eating with people considered “impure.”

The Pharisees asked Jesus’ disciples, *“Why does Jesus choose to eat with those terrible people?”*

When Jesus heard this, he told them, *“Healthy people don’t need a doctor; sick people do. I’ve come to call people to a changed life – inside and out. I’m not here to spend my time with people who already think they’re good enough.”*

Scene Four: An Immoral Woman

Another time, a Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus over for dinner. But when Jesus entered the house, Simon did not welcome Him or have his servant wash Jesus’ feet as was the custom.

But Jesus still reclined at the table for dinner. Unexpectedly, a woman entered the house looking for Jesus. The woman was known in the town as being sexually immoral, so the Pharisees would not go near her.

She approached Jesus, carrying a jar of very expensive perfume, and kneeled down at His feet. She began to cry, and as she wept, her tears covered Jesus’ feet. Then, she uncovered her hair and let it down – something a woman was forbidden to do in that culture. The guests stared in shock and outrage.

She used her long hair to gently wipe her tears and clean Jesus' feet. Then, the woman bent down and kissed Jesus' feet, and poured her perfume on them.

Simon, the Pharisee who'd invited Jesus to dinner, said to himself, *"If Jesus were truly one of God's prophets, he wouldn't allow this shameful woman to touch him."*

But Jesus answered the Pharisee's thoughts, saying, *"Simon, I have something to tell you ..."* "Go ahead," Simon replied.

Jesus told him this story. *"A man loaned money to two people – 500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to the other. Neither person could repay the man, so he decided to forgive both of their debts. Who would you guess was more grateful and loved the man more after he did this?"*

Simon answered, *"I suppose the one who was forgiven the larger debt."*

"That's right," Jesus said. *"Do you see this woman? When I entered your home, you didn't offer me any water to wash the dust off my feet. But she washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You didn't greet me warmly, but she has not stopped kissing my feet. You didn't anoint my head with oil, a courtesy I would have expected. But she has anointed my feet with rare perfume."*

Then Jesus said to the woman, *"Everything you've done wrong is forgiven."*

The men at the dinner table couldn't believe what they were hearing. They asked each other, *"Who does this man think he is? He thinks that HE can forgive sins?!"*

Jesus looked again at the woman and said, *"Your faith has saved you; go in peace!"*

Retell the Story

- What was Jesus' message?
- Who did He call to follow Him?
- Who did Jesus help that no one else would?
- What was Jesus' interaction with tax collectors like?
- What about His interaction with the Pharisees?

- What did the woman in the story do for Jesus?
- What did Jesus do for her?
- How did people respond to Jesus' acceptance of these people?

Discuss the Story

- What is your first reaction to this story? How did this story make you feel?
- What stood out to you from this story? What did you notice for the first time?
- What from this story made you wonder?
- How did people respond to Jesus in the story? The fishermen? The man with leprosy? Etc ..
- Why do you think Jesus called common fishermen and corrupt tax collectors to be His disciples instead of the religious leaders of the day?
- In this story, the religious leaders were outraged by Jesus spending time with the outcasts of society – tax collectors, criminals, and prostitutes. Why do you think Jesus spent time with these people?
- Did you hear anything that reminded you of *other* stories?
- From this story, what did you notice about humans?
- From this story, what do you notice about God's character or his qualities?

1) I CAN RELATE

Of all the people Jesus interacted with in this story (fishermen on the shore, a leper, Matthew the tax collector, Simon the Pharisee, the sinful woman), who do you relate to most and why? What do you think Jesus would say or do if you were able to share a moment in person with Him today?

2) THOSE PEOPLE

When the Pharisees saw Jesus eating with sinners and tax collectors, they asked His disciples, "Why does Jesus choose to eat with those terrible people?" How would you respond to this question if you were one of Jesus' disciples? How does Jesus want us to treat "those people"?

3) IN THE MARGINS

When Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus over for dinner, he didn't realize that an uninvited guest would show up as well. When Jesus is invited, the marginalized come with him. Who are the marginalized in our world today? What does it look like for the marginalized to find a seat at the table?

Pray

God,

We are so thankful for a God who draws the least and the lost to Himself. Help us let go of the fear of failure and the expectations for perfection. Encourage us to trust you each step of the way as we follow you. May we become like Your disciples, imperfect people who follow a perfect heavenly Father! Amen.