



INSPIRED

A SERIES ON THE
STORIES WE TELL.

*SERIES BASED OFF THE INSPIRED BOOK BY
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F R O M T H E

A U T H O R

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Inspired is intended to be read, wrestled with, discussed, debated, and creatively engaged in the community context. The Bible does not always provide clear, straightforward answers to complex questions. Instead, it relies on story and song, letters and laws, poetry and proverb to spark among God's people the questions, ideas, and actions that bring them closer to the truth and one another.

Inspired is intended to set the table by providing questions for reflection and discussion, ideas for creative engagement, and additional resources for becoming creative with the biblical text and approaching the Bible's stories in some new ways.

METHODS OF PRAYER & ENGAGEMENT

Evans found that these methods of reading and engaging the biblical text were most used and recommended in this guide.

Readers are encouraged to learn more about each one.

Midrash is a Jewish method of interpretation and commentary that plumbs the depths of Scripture by clarifying or expounding on a point of law, "filling in the gaps" of the biblical text with new stories and anecdotes. This prayer practice is a way of reading between the lines of Scripture and imagining the possibilities.

Lectio Divina (Latin for *divine reading*) is a spiritual discipline that has been practiced for more than a thousand years. The practice traditionally follows four steps: lectio (reading), meditatio (meditation), oratio (prayer), and contemplatio (contemplation).

The Ignatian Method encourages Christians to not simply read or hear these gospel stories, but to immerse themselves in the stories, to use their imaginations to put themselves into the scene.

*"Origin stories tell us who we are, where we come from,
and what the world is like."*



READ GENESIS 32:22-32

After reading this week's passage, take some time to consider the "origin stories" that help to shape your life.

SUNDAY, JUNE 4TH

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What are some of the family stories, religious stories, and cultural stories that have shaped who you are and how you understand the world? In what ways have those stories been harmful or helpful to you?
2. What might it mean for you to wrestle with the Bible until God gives you a blessing? What sort of blessing are you seeking?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How have you traditionally understood the nature of the Bible's creation stories? As scientific, historical accounts? As myths? How does considering the context of the Babylonian Exile change or inform your interpretation?
2. What are some ways in which you've observed the Bible treated as a conversation ender or conversation starter?

PRACTICE OF THE WEEK:

Read Genesis 32:22-32. In the spirit of Midrash, imagine the conversation between Jacob's two wives, Rachel and Leah, as they wait camping by the river with their children, maids, and livestock-- for Jacob to return from his night wrestling with the stranger. Consider writing a dialog between the two.

WEEK 2 DELIVERANCE STORIES

"Don't you dare forget."



READ GENESIS 16

After reading this week's passage, take some time to reflect on how your life functions, whether are you a giver or receiver, full or needing fill, and how these functions mirror the "well."

SUNDAY, JUNE 11TH

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Have there been times in your life when God has "made a way" where there seems to be no way? What did you learn from those experiences?
2. Do you find yourself in some sort of wilderness now? What brought you here? What name would you give your "well" in the wilderness?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are some ways in which the Bible has been used to harm and oppress people throughout history and in the present? What are some ways it has been used for liberation? Do these examples shake your faith in the Bible, strengthen it, or a little of both?
2. What comes to mind when you hear a reference to "the Law" in scripture? Is your impression positive or negative? Has that changed?

PRACTICE OF THE WEEK:

Set aside some time this week to either write, draw, or reflect on a time you have encountered "dislocated exegesis," a method of engaging scripture in unexpected places. Introduce the **Lectio Divina** prayer practice to guide you through this time.

"I don't want to become a person who is unbothered by these texts, and if Jesus is who he says he is, then I don't think he wants me to be either."



JOSHUA 6; PHILIPPIANS 2:6-11

After reading this week's passage, take some time to consider how our world holds a great deal of struggle and trouble today. These realities and the Bible's war stories force a confrontation with darkness-- and that's not a bad thing. Jesus turned the war story in our world on its head.

SUNDAY, JUNE 18TH

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. If you could make one story or verse from the Bible disappear, which one would it be?
2. What are some hard questions you have about the Bible that perhaps you've been afraid to confront? What does it look like for you to "face these questions head-on, mind and heart fully engaged?"

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are some other Bible stories you find especially troubling?
2. Have you ever doubted your faith? Or doubted the Bible? How have your friends, family, and religious leaders responded to those doubts?
3. What are some of your favorite (or least favorite) war stories? Do you see similarities between how we tell war stories in our culture and how the ancients told war stories in theirs?

PRACTICE OF THE WEEK:

Set aside some time this week to either write, draw, or reflect on a time you have encountered a "well." This can be something you pour into or something you are gaining from.

"You reap what you sow--except when you don't"



ECCLESIASTES 3:1-8; PROVERBS 3

The iconic idea of the Bible as a book of black and white encourages us to remain in an emotional state of immaturity. After reading this week's passage, take some time to consider how your faith has met wisdom.

SUNDAY, JUNE 25TH

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Evans writes, "In many ways, the Bible of my youth was set up to fail." Can you relate? Has the Bible, or your expectations around the Bible, ever disappointed you?
2. How have you observed, in your own life, wisdom as circumstantial? What are some examples of advice being helpful and true in one scenario, but false in another (like "you reap what you sow" or, "don't go to bed angry")?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Were you aware of the Bible's "angry psalms"? How often do you sing songs of lament and frustration in your personal or corporate worship? Why might there be a need for more of that?
2. Have you noticed that the Bible contains tensions and contradictions before? If so, how did you resolve them?

PRACTICE OF THE WEEK:

Set aside some time this week to reflect on a period of lament. Write a poem reflecting upon that period and how you returned to your faith in the end.

WEEK 5 RESISTANCE STORIES

"What I love about the Bible is the story isn't over. There are still prophets in our midst. There are still dragons and beasts. It might not look like it, but the Resistance is winning. The light is breaking through."



ESTHER 1:10-24

After reading this week's passage, take some time to consider how your faith has met wisdom.

SUNDAY, JULY 2ND

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Do you ever feel hopeless or cynical about the injustices you observe in the world around you? Does anything from this chapter encourage you?
2. Who are some people you consider to be modern-day prophets- men and women willing to challenge the powerful and speak up for the marginalized?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What comes to your mind when you hear the word *apocalyptic*? Has that changed since reading this week's verses? What about *prophets* and *prophecy*?
2. Why might it be considered controversial for Christians in America to highlight biblical themes about resisting injustices of great Empires?

PRACTICE OF THE WEEK:

Set aside some time this week to reflect on our world and sketch or write a short paragraph about your ideal world. Take some time to compare your piece with the current status of the world and dwell on the differences and similarities between the two.

*"Every Christian gets a testimony.
Every Christian gets a 'gospel according to...'"*



JOHN 4:1-26

After reading this week's passage, take some time to consider how the stories of Jesus matter to you. How do they affect you? How do they affect the church? And the world?

SUNDAY, JULY 9TH

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. When did you first encounter Jesus? What did Jesus look like, smell like, seem like? What about his message and presence first struck you as "good news"?
2. Why are you a Christian? (Yes, this is a BIG QUESTION. Take your time with your response and let it take you to unexpected places.)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are some of your favorite stories from the gospel? Is there one encounter someone had with Jesus that always moves you? Why does that story strike you in that way?
2. What does it mean to you that "Jesus didn't just come to die, he came to live"?

PRACTICE OF THE WEEK:

Set aside some time this week to reflect on John 4:1-42, the story of the woman at the well. Using the Ignatian Method, imagine the story from the perspective of one of Jesus' disciples. Consider writing a short journal entry about your reflection.

"Is it any wonder that the first symbol of the Christian faith wasn't the cross, but rather the ichthys--the sign of a fish?"



MARK 5:21-43

After reading this week's passage, take some time to consider how we sometimes stand in the way of our own miracle.

SUNDAY, JULY 16TH

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Do you have trouble believing some of the Bible's miracle stories? Which ones?
2. Which of the Bible's miracle stories strike you as especially strange, delightful, or unbelievable?
3. How have you made sense of the Bible's miracles stories in the past? What guidance have you received from faith leaders, family, and friends?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What do you think of the author's advice that, when it comes to belief, sometimes you have to "fake it till you make it," that you have to "move your feet and your heart will catch up"? Have you found this true in your own life? What does it look like to "jump when it matters"?

PRACTICE OF THE WEEK:

Read the healing stories in Mark 5:21-43. Using the Ignatian Method, imagine the events from one of the characters' perspectives-- the man, the bleeding woman, someone in the crowd, one of the disciples the mother or sister of the little girl who was raised.

"No one lives in general--not even Christ or his church."



1 CORINTHIANS 13

After reading this week's passage, take some time to consider how "we live inside an unfinished story..." as people of faith living in today's times.

SUNDAY, JULY 23RD

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Have quotes from the Bible's epistles ever been used to justify cruelty or injustice against you or someone else you love? How did that affect your view of the Bible?
2. How is the experience of engaging the epistles a bit like the experience of engaging wisdom literature?
3. What has changed or been revealed to you throughout this series? What parts of the Bible are you inspired to explore in more depth?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How has the apostle Paul been regarded in your faith community? Is he lauded to the point that he is held in as high esteem as Christ himself or is he grumbled about and largely ignored? Do you see his words as illuminating, brilliant, problematic, sexist, outdated, timeless-- or perhaps all of the above?
2. What are some of the other stories (told by culture, our country, our experiences, and religious communities) that compete for our allegiance and imagination?

PRACTICE OF THE WEEK:

Read 1 Corinthians 13 using the method of Lectio Divina. It's a familiar passage so focus on the images, phrases, and words that strike you in a fresh way. Consider how this passage puts the epistles and all of scripture into perspective.



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