

## 3Story Teams Getting Started

While *3Story Teams* is a new phrase, the concept of building community and including Jesus is very familiar in the YFC organization. In fact, you may already be well on your way in developing *3Story Teams*! In an effort to start us all on the same page, please make sure you have moved through the following stages as you build your *3Story Teams*. If you need a hand, contact us at [training@yfc.net](mailto:training@yfc.net)

- Watch Foundations of *3Story* video (this includes 4 people describing 3Story Teams and first steps in prayer).
- Complete the reflective prayer assignment (included with above video).
- Review *3Story Teams* Definition and FAQs
- *3Story Team* Leaders have some unique qualities as described in the definition and FAQ page, so check those out. Remember, if there is someone on your current team who is a “natural” at leading in spaces like this, you might consider sharing the leadership of your team with him/her.
- Gather your group of no less than 4, no more than 10 (we think 5 is PERFECT) *3Story Team* members.
- Use *3Story Teams Meet Up Guide* to get started. We strongly suggest applying the first 4 lessons as they help set tone and pace for these unique gatherings. Then, move into the content on Prayer.

## 3Story Teams Meet Up Guide

This guide is designed to help *3Story Team* leaders begin and sustain a pattern of meeting regularly with *3Story Teams* for the purpose of dwelling together with God.

While *3Story Teams* is a new phrase, the concept of building community and including Jesus is very familiar in the YFC organization. In fact, you may already be well on your way in developing *3Story Teams*! We strongly suggest you start with the first 4 Meet Up Outlines offered here in order to build a solid foundation and pattern. These meet ups will be different than typical ministry planning or staff meetings And because team members may be familiar with each other, they may have some patterns to their gatherings.

By following the provided outlines, we’re hoping leaders create and maintain a new space in which members abide with one another in Jesus.

## Meet Up 1

*\*\*Before this meet up text or email all members asking them to bring an item to the gathering that represents something that God is shaping in them right now. Tell them that each group member will have 90 seconds to talk about how the item represents what Jesus is shaping in them. You might offer a few examples like, "It could be a photo of something or a page from a magazine or a book or a boxing glove ... "*

### **5-10 minutes      Preparing our hearts.**

Church attendees might be familiar with that phrase as church leaders say, "Let's prepare our hearts for worship." Or, "Let's prepare to receive the Lord's Supper." Leaders who are new to the church scene might not be familiar with that phrase. So take a few minutes to explain and then enter a space of preparing your hearts.

The leader might say something like,

Let's spend the first few minutes of our time preparing our hearts to abide with one another and with Jesus. We'll take a few minutes of quiet on our own so we can set aside all that the day has held and turn our attention toward Jesus. Go ahead and silence your cell phones now and if you'd like, you can find a space in the room where you feel more alone and simply quiet yourself. Take a couple of deep breaths. Try to become aware that God is with you. After about 5 minutes I'll invite us to come together in a circle.

### **30-40 minutes      Abiding together.**

The leader might say something like,

Hopefully most of you got the email or text I sent asking you to bring an item that represents something that Jesus is shaping in you right now. Let's take some time to share those items. I'll keep track of time. Don't feel rushed but also try to stay limited to your 90 seconds. When you're close to the 90 second mark I will wave at you so that you know to wrap up. We won't ask any questions or offer any follow up comments. and I will invite you to pay attention 2 your own listening skills as people share. Try to notice if you are easily distracted or if you stay clearly focused or if you have reactions to what someone else says. Just pay attention to yourself and how you listen. It's not a test , it's just a practice in self-awareness. OK. Who will begin?

Leader keeps time , allowing each member to share. Leader keeps group on task and does not allow distractions to disrupt sharing activity. If 10 people share it will take approximately 15 minutes. At the close of sharing, invite members to respond to these questions.

- What makes an activity like this important for a team?
- How was it for you identifying something that Jesus is shaping in you right now?
- What did you notice about yourself and your listening skills as you listen to others?
- As you listened and shared your own story, do you sense any invitations that God is offering to you?
- Finally as you consider what Jesus is shaping in you what can we do as your three story team of supporters to elevate or support the work that Jesus is doing?

The leader might say something like,  
This might be a good time to take some notes if any of you want to keep track of how you might support one another in the coming week now that we know what Jesus is shaping in each of us.

Before we moved to wrap up, let's be quiet together again and pray for each other. We'll do this silently and after a minute or two I will close with "Amen".

### **10-15 minutes.      Dwelling Together**

This section represents what's most unique about *3Story Teams*. Rather than switching gears toward statements like, "How can we apply what we've talked about today?" Or, "What next steps should we take?", *3Story Teams* pause and together commit to spending the next week to two weeks doing the same practice . Alone, but together.

The practice for this first week is to spend 10 minutes each day quieting ourselves and noticing the presence of Jesus with us. As we do this practice, we ask Jesus to help us see what he is currently shaping in us for our own abundant lives and for the benefit of others. After 10 minutes alone with Jesus team members jot down any unique thoughts that The Holy Spirit has brought to mind.

By entering this simple practice individually but together, we are dwelling together with Jesus. We don't waste any time evaluating the outcomes of our prayers. Rather, we offer this commitment to one another and to Jesus and we trust that as it pleases Him, He will do the work He wants to do (rather than us deciding!).

## **Meet Up 2**

Prior to this gathering, the group leader should read the directions (offered below) for Lectio Divina and choose a passage for the group practice. To follow the yearly Lectionary readings with thousands of believers across the world, you can visit sites like this one:

<https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/daily.php?year=A>

Or, this site offers weekly Gospel Readings (and questions) for Lectio:

<https://santacruzefellowship.com/category/weekly-gospel-reading/page/2/>

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The leader might say something like,  
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find a space in the room where you feel more alone and simply quiet yourself. Take a couple of deep breaths. Try to become aware that God is with you.

As you quiet, Consider how you have experienced God's love for you in the last three hours.

After about 10 minutes I'll invite us to come together in a circle.

### **30 minutes                      Abiding together.**

The leader might say something like,

Let's hear from each other about our experiences with God's love in the last 3 hours. You don't have to share but we'd like to hear from as many of you as possible. And please feel free to be honest about your response that that the truth is sometimes it is hard to identify how God is loving us. We'd like this to be a place where you can talk about that as well. After we share a few responses I'll turn the corner and we'll talk a little bit about the practice we all participated in over the last one-two weeks.

Spend the next 10 minutes hearing responses from the group.

The leader might say something like,

As we spent the last week/two weeks practicing noticing what God is shaping in us, let's talk a bit about that experience.

- How did it feel setting aside 10 minutes a day?
- What did that look like for you?
- What obstacles did you notice?
- Did you sense anything new or encouraging that seemed to be from the Holy Spirit?
- Talk about what some benefits might be when a group of people commits to a practice like this.

The leader might say something like,

John 15 talks about abiding in Christ like a branch stays connected to a Vine and then bears fruit. 10 minutes a day of noticing what God is shaping in us is a way of abiding. It's a way of noticing the life that God gives to our own stories.

- How does that fit with the way you currently think about abiding?

Allow for some responses here.

### **15-20 minutes.                      Dwelling Together**

The leader might say something like,

Over the next week (or two) we will commit to another practice that helps us find our story inside God's story. You may be familiar with *Lectio Divina*, which means *divine reading*.

We will practice this now and then, as you continue in the week to come, we will all follow the same template and spend time in the same scripture. So again, will be alone, but together. Dwelling with the Father in our own spaces and souls but committed to one another and sharing the same passage. It will be interesting to see how the Holy Spirit will bind us together through the sacred reading of His Word.

Let's begin together now. I will read a passage a few times following directions as I go. When we end our time today I will give each of you a copy of these directions.

Lectio Divina, or Divine Reading as it is translated, has been practiced in the church since the third century. The "movements" we use today were first described in sixth century writings so it has been around for a long time. It differs from other methods of Bible study in that while traditional Bible study engages the mind, the focus of Lectio is to engage the heart. To view the scripture as the living word, one that brings life and nurture to the soul. As we move from listening with the head to listening to the heart, from activity to receptivity. Creating space for God's word to speak to us. It is an opportunity to trust in the good, slow work of God.

Take a minute to quiet your heart and prepare to listen to God's word.

Holy Spirit, please speak intimately and personally to each of us through the reading of your inspired word. Guide us, we pray. Amen.

The word of the Lord.

**Matthew 10:37-42** (NIV)

*<sup>37</sup>"Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. <sup>38</sup>Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup>Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. <sup>40</sup>"Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me, and anyone who welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. <sup>41</sup>Whoever welcomes a prophet as a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and whoever welcomes a righteous person as a righteous person will receive a righteous person's reward. <sup>42</sup>And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."*

Pause a minutes after reading to practice being quiet.

Then, continue.

As I read this passage from Matthew again try to imagine yourself as one of the original listeners. As you hear these words spoken by Jesus, what is he personally saying to you? What word or phrase stands out?

Second reading of Matthew 10:37-42

Pause for a few minutes of quiet reflection. Sit with your word or phrase for a minute. Does a picture or image come to mind, or maybe a strong feeling or impression that you can identify? Remember the number of times that Jesus asked His listeners to picture or imagine something to bring it to life.

As we read this passage again, what is God's personal invitation for you?

You can write down what God may be inviting you to do, or just "be" in the moment. Pray for the courage to live into what has been given to you.

Read passage this last time and pause for a few minutes of quiet reflection.

Third reading of Matthew 10:37-42

After a few moments of quiet, offer a prayer of thanks and close.

Before we dismiss, would anyone like to share what the word or phrase is calling you to be or do?

This week we will keep to this same passage in Matthew and commit to practicing electio at least three times this week. if you are able, we want to do this every day but we are giving ourselves grace as we learn to do this together.

Pass out (or email) directions for Lectio for the week and dismiss.

## Lectio Divina

*Lectio Divina, or Divine Reading as it is translated, has been practiced in the church since the third century. The "movements" we use today were first described in sixth century writings so it has been around for a long time. It differs from other methods of Bible study in that while traditional Bible study engages the mind, the focus of Lectio is to engage the heart. To view the scripture as the living word, one that brings life and nurture to the soul. As we move from listening with the head to listening to the heart, from activity to receptivity. Creating space for God's word to speak to us. It is an opportunity to trust in the good, slow work of God.*

Here are the simple steps and questions.

Step 1: Find a quiet place, free from distractions. Get comfortable. Take some time to quiet your heart. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your time through the scripture passage.

Step 2: Read the passage first to familiarize yourself with it. Most of us bring years of context into each of our readings.

Step 3: Read the passage a second time praying for ears to hear and eyes to see a word or phrase He wants to bring to your attention today.

Step 4: Sit with your word or phrase for a minute then begin a third reading. Does a picture or image come to mind, or maybe a strong feeling or impression that you can identify? Remember the number of times that Jesus asked His listeners to picture or imagine something to bring it to life.

Step 5: Read the passage again, what is God's personal invitation for you? You can write down what God may be inviting you to do, or just "be" in the moment. Pray for the courage to live into what has been given to you. Give thanks.

## Meet Up 3

**5 minutes**

**Preparing our hearts.**

The leader might say something like,

We'll take a few minutes of quiet on our own so we can set aside all that the day has held and turn our attention toward Jesus. Go ahead and silence your cell phones now and if you'd like, you can find a space in the room where you feel more alone and simply quiet yourself. Take a couple of deep breaths. Try to become aware that God is with you. Consider this quote from Ann Voskamp as you begin to quiet.

***In Christ, you're a native of heaven right now. You aren't a citizen of here trying to work into heaven. You're a citizen of heaven trying to work through here.***

Ann Voskamp. The Way of Abundance, a 60-Day Journey into a Deeply Meaningful Life

After a few minutes I'll invite us to come together in a circle.

**30 minutes**

**Abiding together.**

The leader might say something like,

Sometimes it's hard to remember that we are citizens of heaven right now. What does it look like for you to live as a citizen of heaven right now? Could some of you share what this looks like in your lives?

Pause and allow a few to share

The leader might say something like,

There is a prayer style, called The Examen, that could help us pay attention to God throughout our days. I imagine this might help us as we think of ourselves as citizens of heaven. For the next 20 minutes I'm going to invite you to follow the directions for examine on your own and then we can come together and talk.

Pass out Examen directions or email them (included below). Allow 20-30 minutes of private time for team members to complete the Examen. You might suggest that people return at a specific time or if you're all in the same room you can tell them that you will call him back when time is up.

**15-20 minutes.**

**Dwelling Together**

The leader might say something like,

How was that for you?

What did you notice as you practiced Examen?

What thoughts/responses or nudges from the Holy Spirit you can share?

We took a full 30 minutes to practice together because we carved time out to dwell with Jesus as a team. But as we go through the week we can make this a little shorter so that it fits in our schedules easily. Rather than trying to answer every question, we can settle in with 1 or 2 questions like, "How did I notice Jesus with me in the last three hours?"



Before we gather again next week can we commit to practicing the Examen on our own throughout the week? Is it realistic for each of you to carve out 15 minutes at least four times next week in order to practice Examen? As we participate individually but together as a *3Story Team*, we encourage each other by a mutual commitment. So, let's talk about what will work for all of us.

Pause for comments, make a group decision. Ask group to consider if there are ways to encourage each other in this throughout the week? Perhaps pair up and check in by phone one time?

### **The Prayer of Examen**

The purpose of this prayer practice is to help us process our lives each day with God and before God. The Examen carves out a few moments of solitude in the midst of every day to allow us to reflect on what is going on and where our actions and choices are taking us. It is a form of discernment because it enables us to look concretely at events and ask:

Where is God in this situation?

How is God leading me?

What is God saying to me?

How was God there for me in that specific experience?

What in my present situation is leading me to God and others in love?

What is leading me away?

What is the underlying spirit in my dealing with others?

What is really going on and what's happening in my life these days?

The whole point of Examen is to become more God-centered by observing the moments when we are and are not God centered.

What the prayer looks like...

Transition into Examen:

I pray, asking the Holy Spirit to help me become aware of the love with which God looks upon me as I begin this practice of Examen.

Step one: I notice the gifts that God's love has given me this day and I give thanks to God for them.

Step two: I ask God for insight and the strength that will make this practice of Examen a work of grace; fruitful beyond my human capacity alone.

Step three: I review the last day with God. I look for stirrings in my heart and the thoughts that God has given me this day. I look also for those that have not been of God.

I review my choices in response to both throughout the day and in general.

Step four: I ask for the healing touch of the forgiving God who, with love and respect for me, removes my heart's burdens.

Step five: I look to the next day and, with God, plan concretely how to live it in accord with God's loving desire for my life.

Finally, aware of God's presence with me, I prayerfully conclude this practice of Examen

## Meet Up 4

5 minutes

**Preparing our hearts.**

The leader might say something like,

Let's spend the first few minutes of our time preparing our hearts to abide with one another and with Jesus. We'll take a few minutes of quiet on our own so we can set aside all that the day has held and turn our attention toward Jesus. Go ahead and silence your cell phones now and if you'd like, you can find a space in the room where you feel more alone and simply quiet yourself. Take a couple of deep breaths. Try to become aware that God is with you.

After about 5 minutes I'll invite us to come together in a circle.

**30-40 minutes**

**Abiding together.**

The leader might say something like,

Let's check in with each other. Would each of you take a moment to talk about how you're coming into our time today? If you need a couple more questions to get you started, you might consider sharing... How has God been present to you?

What has your life been like in the last week?

What has been occupying your thoughts since we were together last?

What has prayer been like for you?

Please don't try to answer all of those. Rather, just take two minutes and share how you are coming to our time together. I will watch your time and if you get close to the two-minute mark, I will wave at you so you know to wrap up.

After everyone has had a moment to update the team you may choose to do the next section as individuals or as a group. We suggest you invite people to spend 15 minutes reflecting on their own and then come back to discuss the questions together. We've included these quotes, passage and questions in a handout format below.

Read (or print for all) the quote from AW Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy.

*"How unutterably sweet is the knowledge that our heavenly father knows us completely. No talebearer can inform on us; no enemy can make an accusation stick; no forgotten skeleton can come tumbling out of some hidden closet to abash us and expose our past; no unsuspected weakness in our characters can come to light to turn God away from us, since he knew us utterly before we knew him and called us himself in the full knowledge of everything that was against us."*

Read (or print for all) Psalm 40:17 from The Message

"And me, I'm a mess. I'm nothing and have nothing:  
make something of me.

You can do it; you've got what it takes -- but God, don't put it off."

If you have printed these passages on a page for your team members, include the following questions for them to reflect on in their own space. Then later, as a group, you may ask people to share their responses.

- How would you describe your mess right now?
- Can you see God working in the mess?
- Can you bring your mess into God's presence? Can you own it, and know that he still loves, treasures, accepts and receives you?
- Will you leave your mess with God and move into this day knowing that you are secure in his love for you?

**15 minutes. Dwelling Together**

After sharing in the group, talk about how this conversation might impact your third circle relationships.

Is there an invitation from Jesus or a nudge from the Holy Spirit to act? What might that be?  
How can we support you as you move in that direction?

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- Will you leave your mess with God and move into this day knowing that you are secure in his love for you?
- How does this reflection connect to relationships with our lost friends?