comehungry.™

ARC 1 · STORIES ABOUT JESUS, 1–10

The Ones He Met

Ten stories about Jesus, fully prepped.

THE TEN STORIES

1. The Fishermen Leave Their Nets 4

2. Nicodemus Comes at Night 6

3. The Woman at the Well 8

4. Zacchaeus 11

5. The Rich Young Man 13

6. The Woman Caught in the Middle 15

7. The Mother Who Wouldn't Quit 18

8. Mary, Martha, and the One Thing 21

9. The Children They Tried to Block 23

10. The Widow's Two Coins 25

> A few days before your table meets, learn the story the way hosts have always learned stories: **Recite, Retell, Recall**.

RECITE

Read it out loud to yourself a few times during the week.

RETELL

Say it in your own words with the text nearby to check yourself.

RECALL

Tell it with the text closed. That is it.

OR READ IT FIRST

Cannot get it cold? Read it aloud, close the book, tell it anyway — and ask the table to catch what you drop.

Twenty minutes across a week. Nobody is asking you to memorize a script — the five Cs are all you need to hold in your head, and every story here comes with them already worked out.

The sample telling is training wheels, not a script. It is told, never read — reading aloud makes a classroom, telling makes a table.

STORY 1 · THE ONES HE MET

The Fishermen Leave Their Nets

Read it first: Luke 5:1–11

THE FIVE CS

CONTEXT

Early days. Jesus is teaching by the lake and the crowd is pressing in. Peter and his partners are done for the day — washing nets after a full night of catching nothing.

CHARACTERS

Jesus. Peter — a professional fisherman, tired, and about to be told how to fish by a carpenter. James and John, the partners.

CONFLICT

Jesus tells Peter to go back out and drop the nets in deep water. Peter has every professional reason to say no, and half says it: *we worked all night and caught nothing*.

CLIMAX

The nets come up so full they start to tear. Peter's reaction isn't excitement — it's fear. He falls down and tells Jesus to leave, because he suddenly knows he's out of his depth with this man.

CHANGE

Jesus doesn't leave, and doesn't let Peter hide: *don't be afraid — from now on you'll be catching people*. They pull the boats ashore, the biggest catch of their lives sitting in them, and walk away from all of it.

A SAMPLE TELLING

Peter had been up all night, and he had nothing to show for it. That's the part to feel first — he's a professional. Fishing is what he knows, and the lake had beaten him anyway. So now it's morning and he's on the shore washing his nets, which is the fisherman's version of admitting the day is over.

And there's this teacher nearby — Jesus — with a crowd pressing in so tight he's running out of shoreline. So he climbs into Peter's boat and asks him to push out a little, and he teaches the crowd from the water. Peter's just sitting there, holding the boat steady, listening.

When the teaching's done, Jesus turns to Peter and says: take her out to the deep water and let the nets down.

Now put yourself in Peter's seat. You've fished this lake your whole life. You fished it all last night. And a carpenter is telling you where the fish are. Peter even says it: "Master, we worked all night and caught nothing." But then — and this is the hinge — "if you say so, I'll do it."

The nets go down. And they come up so heavy they start ripping. Peter's shouting for the other boat, and both boats end up so loaded they're riding low in the water.

Here's what Peter does with the greatest catch of his career: he falls down in the fish and says, "Get away from me — I'm too much of a sinner to be around you." Not thank you. Not who are you. *Leave*. Because sometimes the scariest thing isn't failing — it's being seen.

And Jesus says: don't be afraid. From now on, you'll be fishing for people.

They row in. Two boats, the catch of a lifetime. And they leave it all on the beach and follow him.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS, TUNED

01 What stood out to you?

02 What does this show us about Jesus — how he treats a tired man's ordinary work?

03 Where are you in this story — the long empty night, the "if you say so," or facedown in the fish?

04 So what are we going to do about it?

> **AN ACT**
>
> Each person names one ordinary place in their week — a job, a kitchen, a commute — and pays attention there this week for what God might be doing in it. The invitation came at work; watch yours.

STORY 2 · THE ONES HE MET

Nicodemus Comes at Night

Read it first: John 3:1–21

THE FIVE CS

CONTEXT

Jerusalem, Passover season. Jesus has just made a scene in the temple, and the religious leadership is paying attention.

CHARACTERS

Nicodemus — a Pharisee, a member of the ruling council, a man with a reputation to protect. And Jesus.

CONFLICT

Nicodemus comes at night — curious enough to seek Jesus out, careful enough not to be seen. He opens with a compliment; Jesus answers a question he didn't ask: you must be born again.

CLIMAX

Nicodemus, the credentialed teacher, is completely lost — *how can an old man be born a second time*? Jesus gently turns his expertise over: you're Israel's teacher and you don't understand this?

CHANGE

The story doesn't end that night — it doesn't tell us Nicodemus's response at all. But he shows up twice more in John's gospel: once defending Jesus's right to a hearing, and finally, in broad daylight, carrying burial spices to Jesus's grave. The man who came at night ends up unashamed at the worst possible time to be seen.

A SAMPLE TELLING

Nicodemus had every credential a religious man could hold. Pharisee. Member of the ruling council. The kind of man other people asked their questions to.

Which is why he comes at night. Think about that — the teacher with everything figured out has questions he can't afford to be seen asking.

He starts polite, the way careful men do: "Rabbi, we know God must be with you — nobody does what you do otherwise." A compliment, a little distance, safe.

Jesus skips all of it and answers what Nicodemus actually came about: "Unless you're born again, you can't see the kingdom of God."

And Nicodemus — this is the part I love — takes it literally, because it's midnight and his categories are breaking. "How can an old man be born again? He can't climb back into his mother's womb!" You can hear it: the expert has run out of expertise.

Jesus doesn't mock him. He talks about wind — you hear it, you can't see where it comes from or where it goes. The Spirit is like that. You don't manage this, Nicodemus. You don't earn it or credential your way into it. It happens to you, like birth did. Nobody births themselves.

And then Jesus says the sentence half the world knows and this man heard first, at night, confused: God loved the world so much that he gave his Son — not to condemn the world, but to save it.

Here's the ending the story doesn't spell out. We never hear Nicodemus's answer that night. But he turns up again later, defending Jesus in the council. And on the day Jesus dies — when every disciple with a reputation is hiding — Nicodemus walks to the cross in daylight, carrying seventy-five pounds of burial spices. The man who came with questions at midnight ends up unashamed at the darkest hour there was.

Starting over is not just for people who ruined everything. Sometimes it's for the ones who got everything right and are still empty.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS, TUNED

01 What stood out to you?

02 What does this show us about Jesus — how he treats a man who can only come at night?

03 Where are you in this story — and what question would you only ask in the dark?

04 So what are we going to do about it?

> **AN ACT**
>
> Everyone has a question they've been sitting on because asking it feels risky. This week, ask it — to someone safe, to God, or bring it back to this table. Night visits welcome.

STORY 3 · THE ONES HE MET

The Woman at the Well

Read it first: John 4:1–30

THE FIVE CS

CONTEXT

Jesus is traveling through Samaria — a region most Jews walked around rather than through, because the two peoples despised each other. It's noon, the hottest hour, when nobody comes to the well. Except someone does.

CHARACTERS

Jesus, alone and thirsty. A Samaritan woman drawing water at the hour you choose when you want to avoid the other women.

CONFLICT

Every line between them is a wall: Jew and Samaritan, man and woman, rabbi and someone with a history everyone in town knows. He asks her for a drink, and she names the wall out loud: *you're asking me*?

CLIMAX

Jesus tells her about her own life — five husbands, and the man now isn't one — not to shame her but to show her she's fully known. Then he tells her something he's told no one else so plainly: the Messiah you're waiting for — I am he.

CHANGE

She leaves her water jar — the thing she came for — and runs into the town she'd been avoiding, telling everyone: come meet a man who told me everything I ever did. The person hiding at noon becomes the first person in the gospel to bring a whole town to Jesus.

A SAMPLE TELLING

It's noon, the worst hour to haul water, which is exactly why she picks it. The other women come in the cool of the morning, together, talking. She comes alone in the heat. When you've been talked about enough, you learn to shop when the store is empty.

But today there's a man sitting at the well. A Jew — she can tell — which means at least he won't speak to her. Jews don't talk to Samaritans, men don't talk to strange women, and rabbis don't talk to women with her reputation. Three walls. She's safe.

He says, "Would you give me a drink?"

She almost laughs. "You're a Jew. I'm a Samaritan woman. You're asking *me* for water?"

And he says the strangest thing: if you knew who was asking, you'd have asked *him* — and he'd have given you living water. Water that ends thirst for good.

She's still holding the rope. "Sir, you don't even have a bucket."

Then the conversation turns. "Go get your husband," he says. And she gives the careful answer, the practiced one: "I don't have a husband." And he says — gently, the text gives no thunder to it — that's true. You've had five. And the man you're with now isn't one.

Everything she came to the well at noon to avoid, he just said out loud. And he's still sitting there. Still talking to her. Not leaving. She's completely known, and somehow not condemned — and it turns out those two things together are the living water.

They talk theology — she has real questions, about mountains and temples and where God actually is — and he answers her like a student worth teaching. Then she says, "I know the Messiah is coming." And Jesus says: you're talking to him.

Here's my favorite detail in the whole story. She leaves her water jar. The thing she came for, abandoned at the well — because she's running. Into town. Toward all the people she structured her whole day to avoid. "Come see a man who told me everything I ever did!"

The woman who hid at noon became the first evangelist in the gospel. The town came because *she* told them.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS, TUNED

01 What stood out to you?

02 What does this show us about Jesus — what he does with someone who's fully known?

03 Where are you in this story — what's your noon, the thing you schedule your life around avoiding?

04 So what are we going to do about it?

AN ACT

Her act was an invitation to the people she avoided. This week: one honest conversation with someone you've been keeping at a careful distance — or one invitation to this table for someone who thinks they're the last person who'd be welcome.

STORY 4 · THE ONES HE MET

Zacchaeus

Read it first: Luke 19:1–10

THE FIVE CS

CONTEXT

Jericho, a wealthy customs town. Jesus is passing through, days from Jerusalem and the cross. Crowds line the road.

CHARACTERS

Zacchaeus — not just a tax collector but the *chief* tax collector, rich off his neighbors, and short. The crowd, which hates him. Jesus.

CONFLICT

Zacchaeus wants to see Jesus, and the crowd is a wall — nobody's making room for the collaborator. So a rich man does something rich men don't do: runs ahead and climbs a tree like a child.

CLIMAX

Jesus stops under the tree, looks up, and calls him by name: Zacchaeus, come down — I'm staying at your house today. Not "clean up your act and we'll talk." Dinner first. The crowd mutters: he's gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner.

CHANGE

Zacchaeus stands up at his own table and gives half his wealth to the poor and repays everyone he cheated four times over — unprompted. Nobody demanded it. Belonging came first, and the transformation came pouring out after.

A SAMPLE TELLING

Everybody in Jericho knew Zacchaeus, and nobody liked him. He wasn't just a tax collector — he was the *chief* tax collector, which meant he ran the whole racket: collecting for Rome, skimming for himself, getting rich off his own neighbors' backs. In a town like Jericho, that made him wealthy, powerful, and completely alone.

He was also short. Remember that.

Jesus comes through town, and the whole city turns out. And Zacchaeus wants to see him — the story doesn't say why. Curiosity? Something emptier and deeper? Whatever it is, it's strong enough that when the crowd won't let him through — and

you can bet nobody was stepping aside for *him* — this rich, powerful man hikes up his robes, runs down the road like a kid, and climbs a sycamore tree.

Picture it. The most hated man in town, in a tree, hoping nobody notices.

Jesus stops directly under the tree. Looks up. And says his name. "Zacchaeus. Come down — quick. I'm staying at your house today."

Not: come down and account for yourself. Not: pay everyone back and then we'll talk. *I'm coming to your house. Today.* In that world, eating at a man's table meant honoring the man — and the crowd knows it, and the crowd is disgusted. "He's gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner."

We don't get the dinner conversation. We just get what came out of it: Zacchaeus stands up at his own table, in front of everyone, and says — Lord, half of everything I own goes to the poor. And anyone I've cheated, I'm paying back four times over.

Nobody asked him to. That's the whole point. Jesus didn't demand transformation as the price of admission. He invited himself to dinner with the man everyone else had written off — and the welcome did what a thousand demands never could.

"The Son of Man came to seek and to save those who are lost." Jesus said that at Zacchaeus's table. About Zacchaeus. And about the whole guest list ever since.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS, TUNED

01 What stood out to you?

02 What does this show us about Jesus — putting the welcome before the change?

03 Where are you in this story — up the tree, in the muttering crowd, or standing at the table with something to make right?

04 So what are we going to do about it?

> **AN ACT**
>
> Zacchaeus's response had receipts — real money to real people he'd really wronged. Is there anything you owe someone — money, an apology, a repair? One concrete step toward paying it this week.

STORY 5 · THE ONES HE MET

The Rich Young Man

Read it first: Mark 10:17–27

THE FIVE CS

CONTEXT

Jesus is setting out on the road — the road that leads to Jerusalem. A man runs up and kneels in the dust.

CHARACTERS

A rich young man — sincere, moral, earnest, kneeling. Jesus. The stunned disciples watching.

CONFLICT

The man wants eternal life and has kept every commandment since boyhood — and knows something is still missing, or he wouldn't be kneeling in the road. Jesus names the one thing: sell everything, give it to the poor, and follow me.

CLIMAX

The hinge of the story is one line the other gospels don't have: *Jesus looked at him and loved him*. The hard word comes wrapped in love, not judgment.

CHANGE

The man's face falls, and he walks away sad — the only person in the gospels who meets Jesus's direct call and declines. And Jesus lets him go. No chase, no discount, no closing technique. Then he tells the disciples the honest, impossible math — and the door in it: with God, all things are possible.

A SAMPLE TELLING

A man comes running up the road and drops to his knees in front of Jesus. Remember that — he *ran*, and he *knelt*. This isn't a trick question from an enemy. This is a man who wants something desperately.

"Good teacher — what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus walks him through the commandments. Don't murder, don't steal, don't lie, honor your father and mother. And the man says — and I believe him — "Teacher, I've kept all of these since I was a boy."

Here's the thing: he probably had. He's done everything right. He's the kind of man every parent hopes their kid becomes. And he's still kneeling in the dust in the road, because doing everything right hasn't filled whatever is empty in him. He knows it. That's why he ran.

Then comes the line that only Mark records, and it changes how you hear everything after it: *Jesus looked at him — and loved him.*

Loved him. And *because* he loved him, said the hard thing: "One thing you lack. Go, sell everything you have, give it to the poor — you'll have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

The man's face fell. And he walked away grieving, because he was very rich.

He's the only one. All through the gospels, Jesus says "follow me" and people leave nets, tax booths, whole lives. This man is the only one who hears it directly and walks away. And notice what Jesus doesn't do: he doesn't run after him. Doesn't soften the terms. Doesn't call out, "Okay — what about half?" He loved him enough to tell him the truth, and respected him enough to let him choose.

The disciples are floored. If a man like *that* — blessed, moral, rich, which everyone assumed meant God's favor — can't get in, who can? And Jesus gives them the honest math: humanly speaking, it's impossible. Camels and needles. But not with God. *Everything is possible with God.*

The story never tells us what the man did next. Maybe that's on purpose. It leaves the road open — for him, and for whoever's listening.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS, TUNED

01 What stood out to you?

02 What does this show us about Jesus — a love that tells the truth and then lets go?

03 Where are you in this story — and what's the one thing you'd hate for him to name?

04 So what are we going to do about it?

> **AN ACT**
>
> Don't sell everything this week — but loosen one grip. Give one thing away that actually costs you something: money that stings a little, the possession you're oddly attached to, the schedule slot you guard hardest.

STORY 6 · THE ONES HE MET

The Woman Caught in the Middle

Read it first: John 8:1–11

THE FIVE CS

CONTEXT

Dawn at the temple. Jesus is teaching a crowd. His opponents have been hunting for a way to trap him.

CHARACTERS

A woman, caught in adultery and dragged into public. The religious leaders holding stones and scripture. Jesus. And the crowd, watching.

CONFLICT

The trap is airtight: the law says stone her. Say "stone her" and lose everything he's taught about mercy. Say "release her" and stand convicted of breaking the law of Moses. The woman isn't a person to them; she's bait.

CLIMAX

Jesus bends down and writes in the dust — the pause that lets the fever break — then stands and says: whoever among you has never sinned, throw the first stone. And bends back down.

CHANGE

They leave one by one, the oldest first. When it's just the two of them, Jesus asks where her accusers went, and says the two sentences that hold the whole gospel in tension: *neither do I condemn you* — and — *go, and sin no more*. Mercy first. Mercy that wants more for her, not less.

A SAMPLE TELLING

It's early morning at the temple and Jesus is teaching, when the shouting starts. A knot of religious leaders comes shoving through the crowd, and they're dragging a woman.

They stand her up in front of everybody. "Teacher — this woman was caught in the act of adultery. The law of Moses says stone her. What do you say?"

Notice what's missing. Where's the man? You don't get caught in adultery alone. He's not here, because this was never about justice. She's not a defendant to them — she's a trap. If Jesus says stone her, everything he's taught about mercy dies with her. If he

says let her go, he's broken Moses's law in front of witnesses. Either way, they win. She's just the bait.

And she's standing there, in front of a crowd, at dawn, in the worst moment of her life.

Jesus doesn't answer. He bends down and starts writing in the dust with his finger. People have wondered for two thousand years what he wrote; nobody knows. Maybe what matters isn't what he wrote — it's the silence. Every second he writes, the mob's fever cools a little. He makes them stand there holding their stones.

They keep demanding. So he stands up and says one sentence:

"Let the one among you who has never sinned throw the first stone."

And he bends down and writes again. He won't even watch them decide.

Then you hear it: stone after stone hitting the ground. They leave one at a time — and the detail the story keeps is that the *oldest went first*. The longer you've lived, the more you know about yourself.

Finally it's just the two of them. Jesus stands up. "Where did they all go? Didn't even one of them condemn you?"

"No one, sir."

"Then neither do I. Go — and sin no more."

Hold both of those sentences, because he said both. *Neither do I condemn you* — the mercy comes first, unearned, before she's promised anything. And *go and sin no more* — because mercy isn't indifference. He wants her free, not just spared.

The only one there with the right to throw a stone was the one who didn't pick one up.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS, TUNED

01 What stood out to you?

02 What does this show us about Jesus — how he handles both the woman and the mob?

03 Where are you in this story — dragged and exposed, or holding a stone? (Be honest. Most of us have been both.)

04 So what are we going to do about it?

AN ACT

Drop one stone this week — a grudge, a piece of gossip you've been carrying, a judgment you keep rehearsing about someone. Name it privately, put it down, and if it needs a conversation to stay down, have it.

STORY 7 · THE ONES HE MET

The Mother Who Wouldn't Quit

Read it first: Mark 7:24–30

THE FIVE CS

CONTEXT

Jesus has crossed into Gentile territory — Tyre — and is trying to stay hidden and rest. It doesn't work.

CHARACTERS

A Gentile mother with a suffering daughter at home. Jesus, exhausted, whose mission so far has been to Israel.

CONFLICT

She begs him to free her daughter. His answer is a hard word about order and priority — the children get fed first; it isn't right to throw their bread to the dogs. The hardest sentence Jesus speaks to a person asking for help.

CLIMAX

She doesn't leave, doesn't argue the insult, doesn't let go. She takes his own metaphor and turns it: true, Lord — but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs. She out-argues Jesus, and it's the only time anyone does.

CHANGE

Jesus doesn't just relent — he celebrates her: for such a reply, go — the demon has left your daughter. She goes home and finds it exactly so. A Gentile mother's stubborn faith widens the story, and Jesus praises her for wrestling instead of folding.

A SAMPLE TELLING

Jesus is worn out. He's crossed the border into Tyre — Gentile country, outside Israel — and slipped into a house hoping nobody finds him. Mark says it plainly: he didn't want anyone to know he was there.

Somebody finds him. A mother. Her little daughter is tormented by something dark, and she has run out of every other option. She's a Gentile — Greek, born in the wrong region, wrong people, no claim on Israel's Messiah whatsoever. She comes anyway, and falls at his feet, and begs.

And Jesus says the hardest thing you'll ever hear him say to someone asking for help: "First I should feed the children — my own family. It isn't right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

Sit in that for a second, because your table will. It sounds harsh because it is hard. His mission, so far, is to Israel first — the children at the table. She's outside it, and he says so, out loud.

Here's what she doesn't do. She doesn't slink away. She doesn't get offended and quit. She doesn't pretend it didn't sting.

She picks up his own metaphor and turns it in her hands. "That's true, Lord. But even the dogs under the table get the crumbs the children drop."

Even the dogs get the crumbs. She's saying: fine — I'm not claiming a seat I don't have. But I know how big your table is. A crumb from it is enough to heal my daughter. I'll take the crumb.

And Jesus — you can almost hear the delight in it — says: "Good answer!" That's essentially what the text says. "For a reply like that, go home. The demon has left your daughter."

She goes home and finds her little girl lying quietly in bed. Free.

It's the only argument Jesus ever loses, and he loses it on purpose to the person with the least standing in the room — a foreign mother who refused to let go of him. Some people think faith means never pushing back at God. This story says God honors the ones who grab hold and wrestle and won't quit. She's in the canon because the fight *was* the faith.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS, TUNED

01 What stood out to you?

02 What does this show us about Jesus — that he welcomes the wrestle and praises the wrestler?

03 Where are you in this story — what have you stopped asking God for because the first answer was hard?

04 So what are we going to do about it?

AN ACT

Take up one abandoned prayer this week — the thing you quit asking for. Ask again, out loud, every day this week. Stubbornly.

STORY 8 · THE ONES HE MET

Mary, Martha, and the One Thing

Read it first: Luke 10:38–42

THE FIVE CS

CONTEXT

Jesus and his followers come to a village, and a woman named Martha opens her home to them — which means a houseful of guests and a mountain of work.

CHARACTERS

Martha, hosting, working, increasingly resentful. Mary, her sister, sitting at Jesus's feet — the posture of a disciple, a seat women weren't given. Jesus.

CONFLICT

Martha is doing everything and Mary is doing "nothing," and Martha finally boils over — at Jesus: don't you care that my sister has left me to do all the work? Tell her to help me!

CLIMAX

Jesus says her name twice — Martha, Martha — the way you speak to someone you love who is spinning. You're worried and upset over all these details. There is only one thing worth being concerned about.

CHANGE

Mary has chosen it, and it will not be taken away from her. The story ends without telling us what Martha did next — which leaves every busy person at your table standing in her kitchen, holding the choice.

A SAMPLE TELLING

Martha did the brave, generous thing: she opened her home to Jesus. And when Jesus came, he didn't come alone — he came with his people. Which means Martha is now feeding a houseful, and in her world, hospitality is sacred. The meal matters. The details matter. Somebody has to do this.

So she's in it — cooking, serving, managing — and through the doorway she can see her sister.

Mary is sitting. At the feet of Jesus, listening. And you should know what that posture meant: sitting at a rabbi's feet is where *disciples* sat. Students. Men. It was not a seat anyone offered a woman. Mary took it anyway, and Jesus let her keep it.

Martha, meanwhile, is doing the math of resentment that everyone at your table has done: *I am doing everything. She is doing nothing.* And it builds until she does the thing we do when we're maxed out — she doesn't talk to her sister. She goes over Mary's head, to Jesus, in front of everyone: "Lord, doesn't it seem unfair to you that my sister just sits here while I do all the work? Tell her to come help me!"

Notice she even tells Jesus what to say.

And Jesus answers with her name, twice — "Martha, Martha" — which is not a rebuke; it's the tone you use with someone you love who's spun up past hearing. "You're worried and upset over all these details. There's really only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it — and it will not be taken away from her."

He doesn't say the work is worthless. Somebody did have to cook; Jesus ate the food. What he refuses is the trade Martha's making — the presence for the performance. The whole point of the day was sitting in her living room, and she was too busy serving him to be with him.

Read that last line again, because it's aimed at every church person alive: too busy serving him to be with him.

The story doesn't tell us what Martha did next — whether she untied the apron and sat down. It leaves her in the kitchen doorway, holding the choice. Which is exactly where most of us live.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS, TUNED

01 **What stood out to you?**

02 **What does this show us about Jesus — what he actually wanted from that house?**

03 **Where are you in this story — honestly, which sister? And what's the "kitchen" you hide in?**

04 **So what are we going to do about it?**

> **AN ACT**
>
> Trade one hour of doing for one hour of being this week. Put it on the calendar like a shift: no phone, no productivity, just presence — with God, or with a person you usually only *do things for* .

STORY 9 · THE ONES HE MET

The Children They Tried to Block

Read it first: Mark 10:13–16

THE FIVE CS

CONTEXT

Jesus is teaching on serious matters, crowds pressing, the road to Jerusalem underway. Parents start bringing their children — even babies — for him to touch and bless.

CHARACTERS

Parents, hopeful. Children. The disciples, acting as gatekeepers. Jesus.

CONFLICT

The disciples scold the parents and turn them away — the teacher is busy, this is important, children can wait. They're managing access to Jesus, and they're sure they're helping.

CLIMAX

Mark uses a word he almost never uses for Jesus: *indignant*. Angry — at his own team. Let the children come to me. Don't stop them. The kingdom of God belongs to such as these.

CHANGE

Then he raises the stakes on every adult present: whoever doesn't receive the kingdom like a child will never enter it. And he takes the children in his arms, puts his hands on them, and blesses them — unhurried, in the middle of the important day.

A SAMPLE TELLING

Parents started bringing their kids to Jesus. Luke says some were bringing babies. They wanted one simple thing — for him to put his hands on their children and bless them.

And the disciples shut it down. They scolded the parents — *scolded* them. You can hear it, because we've all heard it: the teacher is busy. This is serious work. There's a schedule. The children can wait.

Here's the uncomfortable part: the disciples thought they were helping. They were protecting Jesus's time, managing the crowd, keeping the important things important. Gatekeepers never think they're the villains. They think they're staff.

Mark says Jesus saw it and was *indignant*. That word is rare — Mark barely ever tells us Jesus got angry, and when he does, it's worth asking what causes it. Not the sinners. Not the crowds. Not the exhausting days. What makes Jesus angry is *his own people deciding who gets access to him*.

"Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the kingdom of God belongs to such as these."

And then he turns it around on every grown-up standing there: "I tell you the truth — anyone who doesn't receive the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." The children weren't the interruption to the lesson. The children *were* the lesson. They come with nothing to offer, no credentials, no theology, no résumé — just open hands and no embarrassment about needing. That, Jesus says, is what receiving the kingdom looks like. The adults were the ones who had it backwards.

Then the detail that makes the story: he took the children in his arms, one by one, put his hands on them, and blessed them. On the busy day. On the road to Jerusalem, with a cross ahead of him, Jesus had time to hold kids.

If children are at your table tonight — this story is about them, and they should be the ones to retell it. And if you've ever been made to feel like the interruption to the important thing: the anger in this story is on your behalf.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS, TUNED

01 What stood out to you?

02 What does this show us about Jesus — what makes him angry, and what he makes time for?

03 Where are you in this story — the one being blocked, or honestly, sometimes the gatekeeper?

04 So what are we going to do about it?

> **AN ACT**
>
> If your table has kids: give them a real role at the next gathering — the retelling is theirs. If it doesn't: each person does one unhurried thing this week for a child in their life — full attention, no phone, their agenda not yours. And notice who your habits gatekeep out of things, and open one gate.

STORY 10 · THE ONES HE MET

The Widow's Two Coins

Read it first: Mark 12:41–44

THE FIVE CS

CONTEXT

Jesus's final week. He's in the temple, sitting opposite the collection boxes, watching people give — right after warning the crowd about religious leaders who devour widows' houses and love looking impressive.

CHARACTERS

The rich, giving large amounts, visibly. A poor widow. Jesus, watching, and the disciples he calls over.

CONFLICT

The scene is a contest nobody knows is happening: large impressive gifts against two small coins — worth almost nothing — from a woman with nothing.

CLIMAX

Jesus calls the disciples over specifically to see it: this poor widow has given more than all the others. They gave a tiny part of their surplus. She, out of her poverty, gave everything she had.

CHANGE

No one is healed and nothing visibly happens — except the entire scoreboard is inverted. The measure of a gift isn't its size but its cost. She never knows she was seen. Every church metric since has to answer to this story.

A SAMPLE TELLING

It's the last week of Jesus's life, and he's sitting in the temple, across from the collection boxes. Just watching people give.

The boxes were metal, shaped like trumpets — which meant you could *hear* the money. A rich man's offering, dozens of heavy coins, made a racket. And the rich were coming through, and the coins were ringing, and everyone nearby knew exactly who was generous.

Then a widow comes up. In that world, a widow with no one had nothing — no income, no safety net, no standing. She's the person the system was supposed to

protect and usually devoured; Jesus had said exactly that, about the religious elite, minutes earlier.

She puts in two small copper coins. The smallest coins that existed. Together, worth about a penny. They would have made almost no sound at all.

Nobody noticed. That's the point — nobody *would* notice. Except Jesus, who apparently sat by the offering boxes watching for exactly this.

He calls his disciples over. Stops everything, gathers them, points her out: "I tell you the truth — this poor widow has given more than all the others. They gave a tiny part of their surplus. But she, poor as she is, has put in everything she had — all she had to live on."

Do the math with him, because it's the whole story. The rich gave *from* their extra — big numbers that cost them nothing they'd feel. She gave *from* her lack — a number so small it was embarrassing, and it cost her everything. Jesus doesn't measure the gift. He measures what's left behind after it. By that measure she out-gave the whole temple.

And here's the detail that gets me: she never knew. She dropped her coins and walked out of the story, unaware that God in the flesh had just pointed her out as the greatest giver in the building. She wasn't doing it to be seen. She was seen anyway.

Every scoreboard we keep — attendance, budgets, size, applause — sat in that temple courtyard looking impressive and ringing loudly. Jesus was watching for something else. He still is.

THE FOUR QUESTIONS, TUNED

01 What stood out to you?

02 What does this show us about Jesus — what he watches for, and how he measures?

03 Where are you in this story — giving from surplus, giving from lack, or afraid your small thing doesn't count?

04 So what are we going to do about it?

> **AN ACT**
>
> Give something this week measured her way — by cost, not size. It may not be money: the hour you don't have, the patience you're short on, the help nobody will see. Small and costly beats big and comfortable. Don't tell anyone.

Free to copy, translate, print, and give away — whole or in part, with credit or without. Never to sell.
© 2026 comehungry™ · comehungry.org