



ZIMZUM DISCIPLESHIP VIDEO #2: **THE TRANSFORMATIONAL POWER OF STORY** *SMALL GROUP SESSION 1 - GENERAL OVERVIEW*

GATHERING

Opening Prayer:

Blessed Lord, who caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our Savior Jesus Christ; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Begin with brief check-ins and the opening questions below:

Opening Questions:

How has it been practicing zimzum discipleship and sabbath? Have you been able to find space in your life and make time for delight?

Content Study

- Watch the Transformational Power of Story video from +Phil LaBelle on the ecww.org/zimzum-discipleship website.
- Reflect on the video together. What did you notice? What caught you?

Reading: Matthew 13:10-17 (The Message Bible)

The disciples came up and asked, "Why do you tell stories?" He replied, "You've been given insight into God's kingdom. You know how it works. Not everybody has this gift, this insight; it hasn't been given to them. Whenever someone has a ready heart for this, the insights and understandings flow freely. But if there is no readiness, any trace of receptivity soon disappears. That's why I tell stories: to create readiness, to nudge the people toward a welcome awakening. In their present state they can stare till doomsday and not see it, listen till they're blue in the face and not get it. I don't want Isaiah's forecast repeated all over again:

Your ears are open but you don't hear a thing.

Your eyes are awake but you don't see a thing.
The people are stupid!
They stick their fingers in their ears
so they won't have to listen;
They screw their eyes shut
so they won't have to look,
so they won't have to deal with me face-to-face
and let me heal them.

"But you have God-blessed eyes—eyes that see! And God-blessed ears—ears that hear! A lot of people, prophets and humble believers among them, would have given anything to see what you are seeing, to hear what you are hearing, but never had the chance.

- The spiritual practice we are focusing on these next two months is *lectio divina* ("divine reading"). You can try that now with this lesson.

1. Read the text slowly aloud. Sit for a time and notice where your heart takes you.
2. Meditate on a word or phrase that has caught your attention. Or imagine taking on a role in this narrative and playing it over again in your mind.
3. Pray the passage aloud slowly again, or simply pray the word or phrase that has taken your attention.
4. Quietly consider how this passage might lead you to live more faithfully as a disciple of Jesus, and let the Spirit guide you as to next steps for contemplative living.

Reflection Questions

- Why do you think Jesus—God in the flesh who lived among us—chose telling stories through parables as a primary teaching method over giving out theological doctrine? What's important about the power of stories that can help us draw near to the kingdom of God? Why wouldn't Jesus just make things clear about the kingdom rather than using stories?
- What is a childhood story—either from a book or one a relative told you — that has stayed with you? Why do you think it remains important to you?
- Eugene Peterson writes, "Christians feed on Scripture. Holy Scripture nurtures the holy community as food nurtures the human body. Christians don't simply learn or study or use Scripture; we assimilate it, take it into our lives in such a way that it gets metabolized into acts of love, cups of cold water, missions into all the world, healing and evangelism and justice in Jesus' name, hands raised in adoration of the [Holy One], feet washed in company with the Son." How has Scripture gotten inside of you to bring about change? Recount a time when you took action due to the influence of Scripture.

- The spiritual practice we are focusing on these next two months is lectio divina (“divine reading”) which is briefly outlined above. How might you make space to engage in this practice?

Final Reflections

- What has captured your heart or your imagination in today’s discussion?
- Where have you seen God—or Love—recently?
- What might you intentionally do over the next 2-4 weeks to bring you closer to God?

Closing Prayer

Almighty and Eternal God, you sacrificially withdrew from a place within yourself in order to create the entirety of the cosmos so that you might be in relationship with us and all of creation. Help us to embrace zimzum discipleship and make space in our own lives, that we might more faithfully follow in the way of Jesus who gave of himself for the salvation and healing of the whole world. All this we ask in the name of the Risen Christ, who dwells endlessly with you and the Holy Spirit. Amen.