

Open Bible Stories — Jesus Returns to Heaven

Introduction

Key Idea

The story of Jesus returning to heaven teaches us that Jesus really rose from the dead by showing himself to his disciples and gave them a mission to preach the gospel to all people groups in the world.

Core Belief Verse

"Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, 47 and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem." Luke 24:46-47.

God's Big Story

The eternal God created all things in six days.

He made a good and perfect world.

He made humans in his image to fill the earth and rule over creation.

But humans rebelled against God and ruined God's creation.

God set to restore his world through his promise.

God made a covenant with Abraham.

He promised to bless all nations through Abraham.

God kept his promises across the generations.

God provided Abraham with a promised child, Isaac.

God gave Isaac a wife, and she bore twins, Jacob and Esau.

God blessed Jacob and his sons, and the blessing continued to the next generation.

God rescued Joseph, one of Jacob's sons, and used him to rescue his family.

God caused his people, the Israelites, to multiply in the land of Egypt; eventually, they became slaves.

But God raised up a deliverer, Moses, to deliver his people from slavery.

God judged the Egyptians with harsh plagues; in the final judgment, he passed over his people, who covered their doorposts with the blood of a sacrificed lamb.

Then, God delivered the Israelites by bringing them out of Egypt and crossing the Red Sea on dry land.

God made a covenant with the Israelites and made them his people.

God tested Israel in a series of wilderness wanderings and eventually brought his people into the promised land of Canaan.

God raised up deliverers to lead Israel and rescue them from their enemies.

God formed Israel into a kingdom.

He made a covenant with King David and promised to send a king that would rule his people forever.

Many of Israel's kings were evil, and the kingdom of Israel was divided into two kingdoms.

God sent prophets to warn his people of God's judgment and call them to repent.

When Israel did not repent, God sent his people into exile.

After many years, he brought them back to the land.

Throughout the Old Testament, God promised to send his Messiah to deliver his people from their sin.

After many years, the prophet John was born.

He would prepare people for the coming Messiah.

At the perfect time, God sent his Son, Jesus, to be born of a virgin Mary.

When John and Jesus grew up, John baptized Jesus as a sign that Jesus was God's beloved Son.

Jesus endured all manner of temptation without ever sinning.

When he was thirty years old, he launched a public ministry of preaching, teaching, and healing.

He taught his disciples about the life of compassion, sacrifice, and forgiveness.

Jesus performed many miracles: he fed a crowd of five thousand, he walked on water, he healed the sick, and he cast out demons.

He proclaimed to people the nature of real faith, God's kingdom, and how fallen humans can be restored in relationship with God.

Toward the end of his ministry, Jesus revealed his power and glory to his disciples.

He raised a dead man to life.

Jesus was betrayed by one of his disciples and put on trial before a Roman governor.

Jesus was sentenced to death and crucified on a cross Three days later, Jesus rose again from the dead.

After meeting with many of his disciples, Jesus went back to heaven.

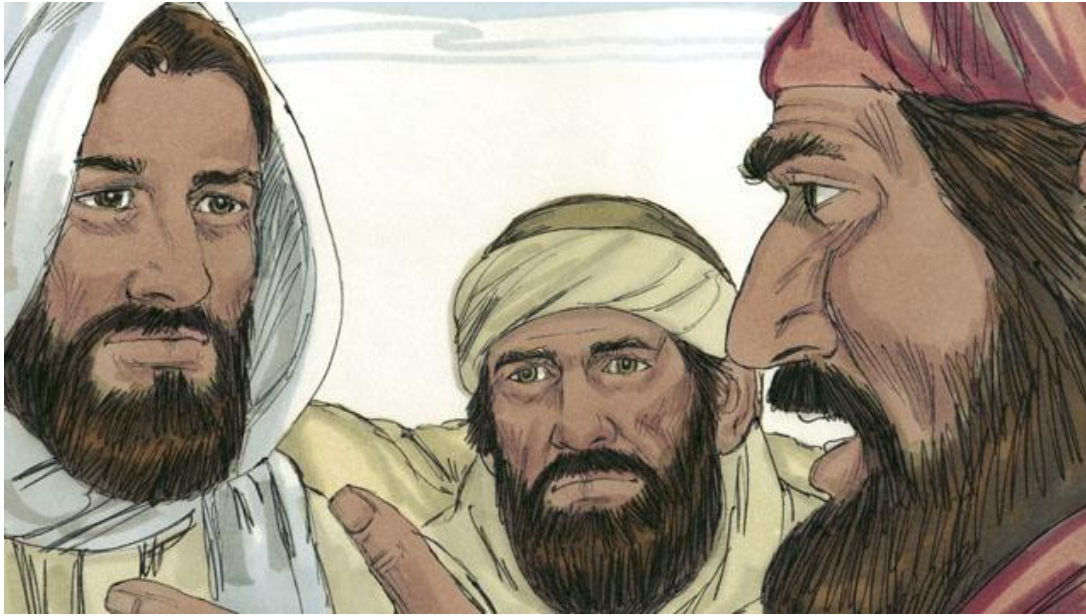
The Story: Jesus Returns to Heaven

42-01



On the day that God raised Jesus from the dead, two of his disciples were going to a nearby town. As they walked, they talked about what had happened to Jesus. They had hoped he was the Messiah, but he was killed. Now the women said he was alive again. They did not know what to believe.

42-02



Jesus approached them and started walking with them, but they did not recognize him. He asked what they were talking about. They told him about all the things that had happened to Jesus during the previous few days. They thought they were talking to a foreigner who did not know what had happened in Jerusalem.

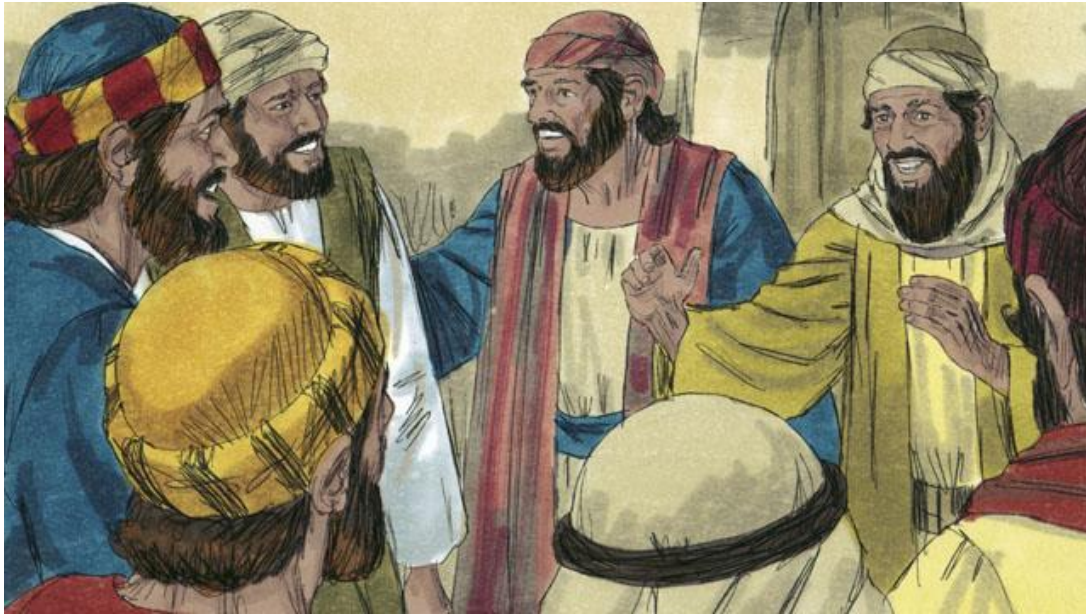
42-03



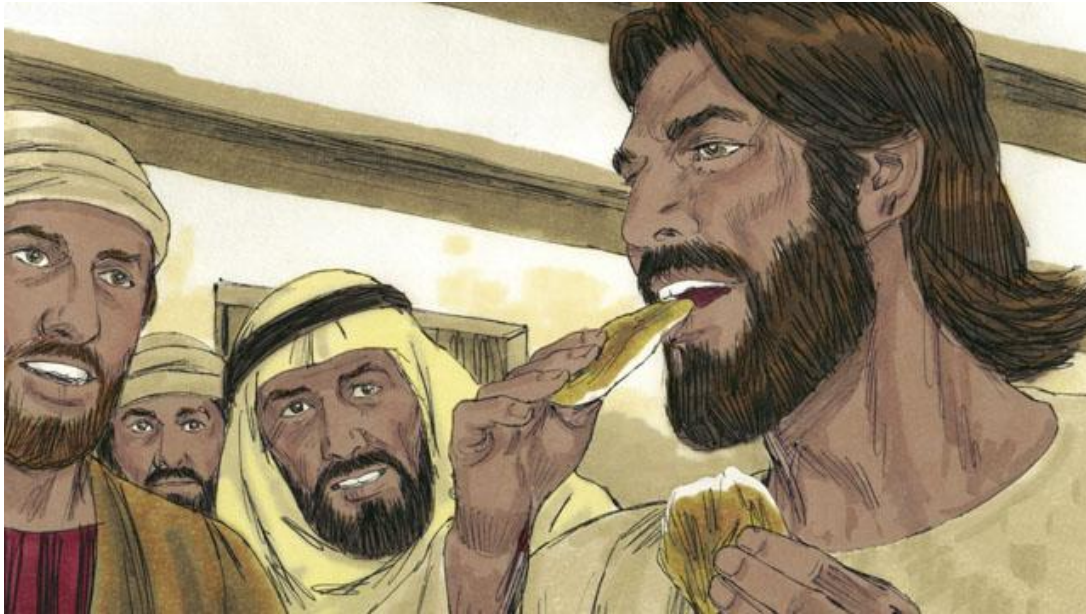
Then Jesus explained to them what God's word said about the Messiah. Long ago, prophets had said that evil men would make the Messiah suffer and die. But the prophets also said he would rise again on the third day.



When they arrived at the town where the two men wanted to stay, it was almost evening. They invited Jesus to stay with them, so he went into a house with them. They sat down to eat their evening meal. Jesus picked up a loaf of bread, thanked God for it, and broke it. Suddenly, they recognized that he was Jesus. But at that moment, he disappeared from their sight.



The two men said to each other, "That was Jesus! That is why we were so excited when he explained God's word to us!" Immediately they left and went back to Jerusalem. When they arrived, they told the disciples, "Jesus is alive! We have seen him!"



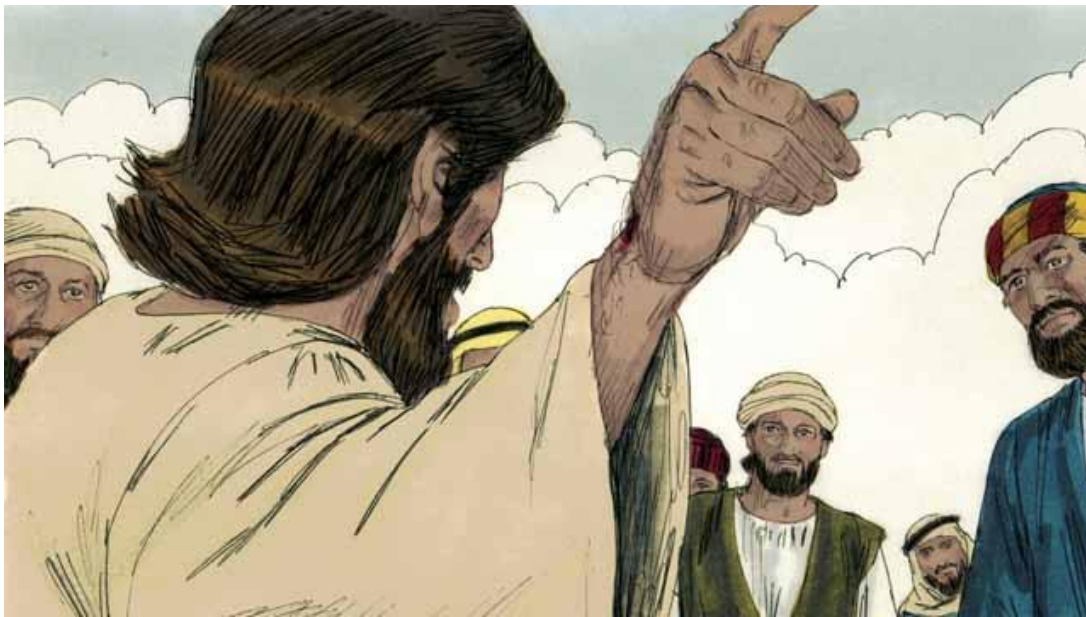
As the disciples were talking, Jesus suddenly appeared in the room with them. He said, "Peace to you!" The disciples thought he was a ghost, but Jesus said, "Why are you afraid? Why do you not think it is really I, Jesus? Look at my hands and feet. Ghosts do not have bodies like I do." To show that he was not a ghost, he asked for something to eat. They gave him a piece of fish, and he ate it.



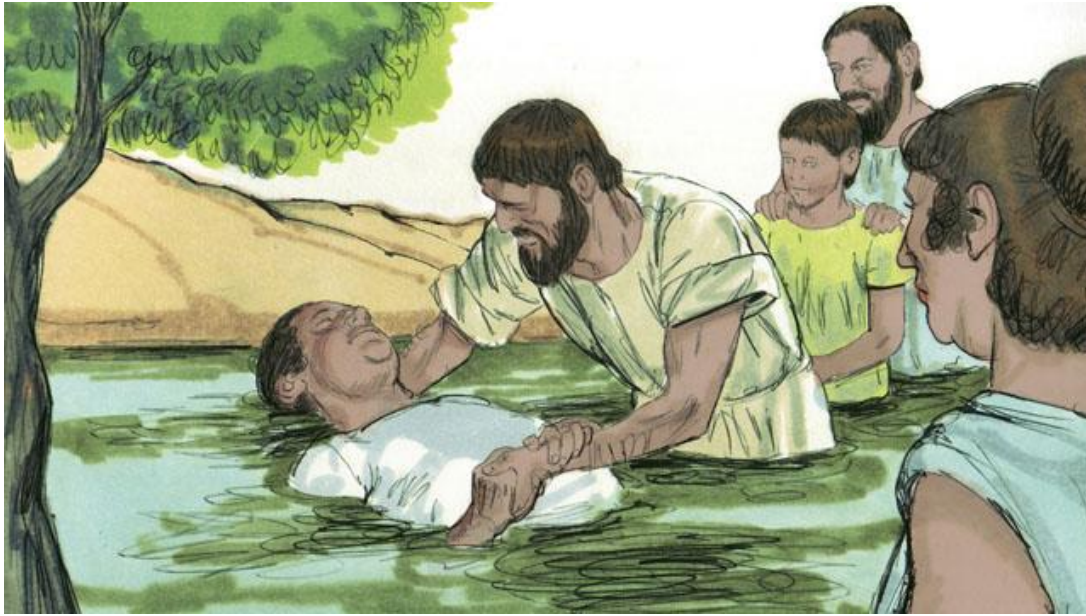
Jesus said, "Everything about me that God's word says will happen, I have told you that it must happen." Then Jesus made them understand God's word better. He said, "Long ago, prophets wrote that I, the Messiah, would suffer, die, and then rise from the dead on the third day."



"The prophets also wrote that my disciples will proclaim God's message. They will tell everyone to repent. If they repent, God will forgive their sins. My disciples will proclaim this message starting in Jerusalem. Then they will go to all people groups everywhere. You are witnesses of everything I have said and done, and of everything that happened to me."



During the next 40 days, Jesus appeared to his disciples many times. Once, he even appeared to more than 500 people at the same time! In many ways, he proved to his disciples that he was alive and taught them about the kingdom of God.



Jesus said to his disciples, "God has given me the right to rule over everyone in heaven and on earth. So I am telling you now: go and make disciples in all people groups. In order to do this, you must baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. You must also teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. Remember, I will always be with you."



Forty days after Jesus rose from the dead, he told his disciples, "Stay in Jerusalem until my Father gives you power. He will do this by sending the Holy Spirit upon you." Then Jesus went up to heaven, and a cloud hid him from their sight. Jesus sat down in heaven at the right hand of God to rule over all things.

A Bible story from: Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:12-20; Luke 24:13-53; John 20:19-23; Acts 1:1-11

Community Study: Deep Commitment—Building Loyalty in Personal Relationships

- **Key Idea:** entrusting ourselves to each other in love
- **Key Passage:** John 15:9-14
- **Main Session:** OBS 42 (Jesus Returns to Heaven)

Recite the Core Belief Verse (3-5 minutes)

The verse below summarizes the teaching of the current passage. Read the verse out loud as a community. Read it again several times as a group until the whole community can recite it from memory.

22 Christ is at the right hand of God. He went into heaven. Angels, authorities, and powers must submit to him. 1 Peter 3:22

OR

12 But when Christ offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Hebrews 10:12

Think about Jesus' Rule (5-10 minutes)

Jesus is king. After he resurrected from the dead, Jesus ascended to heaven. He rules over everything and everyone. Jesus completed his work of salvation. Think about what it means to live under Jesus' power.

To live under Jesus' rule means...

Read the Passage (3-5 minutes)

Our commitment to Jesus causes us to be committed to one another. Jesus sacrificed his life to save us. God calls us to devote our lives to him and other believers. Read the passage below to learn about what God teaches about sacrificial devotion in relationships.

9 As the Father has loved me, I have also loved you. Remain in my love. 10 If you keep my commandments, you will remain in my love, as I have kept the commandments of my Father and

remain in his love. 11 I have spoken these things to you so that my joy will be in you and so that your joy will be complete. 12 This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 No one has greater love than this—that he lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do the things that I command you. John 15:9-14

Discuss the Passage (10-15 minutes)

Reflect Together (5 minutes)

Pray to God (5 minutes)

Sing a Song (3-5 minutes)

Movement 1: Understand the Story

Read each question aloud. Give the group time to answer before sharing the answer.

Observation Questions

42-01

What were two of Jesus' disciples doing at the beginning of this story?

On the day Jesus came back to life, two of Jesus' disciples were walking on a road to a nearby town.

What were the two disciples talking about as they walked along the road?

They were talking about what had happened to Jesus.

What concern did the two disciples have?

They hoped Jesus was the Messiah, but he was killed. The women said he was alive again, but they did not know what to believe.

42-02

Who approached the two disciples while they were walking on the road?

Jesus approached the two disciples on the road and started walking with them.

Did the disciples recognize Jesus?

No. They did not recognize it was Jesus at this time.

What did Jesus say to them?

Jesus asked them what they were talking about.

What did the disciples tell Jesus?

They told Jesus about the things that had happened to Jesus during the previous few days.

Who did the two disciples think Jesus was when he approached them on the road?

They thought he was a foreigner who did not know what had happened in Jerusalem.

42-03

What explanation did Jesus give to the disciples on the road?

Jesus explained what God's word said about the Messiah.

What had the prophets said would happen to the Messiah?

They had said the Messiah would suffer and die but would rise again on the third day.

42-04

What time did the two disciples arrive in town?

They arrived when it was almost evening.

What time did the two disciples say to Jesus when they arrived in the town where they wanted to stay?

The disciples invited Jesus to stay with them.

How did Jesus respond to their invitation?

Jesus went into the house with the disciples and sat down for an evening meal.

What did Jesus do during the evening meal with the disciples?

Jesus picked up bread, thanked God for it, and broke the bread.

What happened when Jesus broke the bread?

The disciples recognized that it was Jesus, and then Jesus disappeared from their sight.

42-05

What did the two disciples say after they recognized Jesus?

They acknowledged that the man was Jesus, and they said that this was why they were so excited while Jesus instructed them from God's word.

What did the two disciples do after Jesus left them?

They returned to Jerusalem and told the other disciples that Jesus was alive and that they had seen him.

42-06

What did Jesus say to the disciples when he appeared in the room?

Jesus said to his disciples, "Peace to you!"

What did the disciples think about Jesus when he appeared in the room?

They thought Jesus was a ghost.

What did Jesus ask his disciples?

Jesus asked them why they were afraid and why they did not think it was really Jesus.

How did Jesus prove to the disciples that he was not a ghost?

To show that he was not a ghost, Jesus showed them his hands and feet. He told them that ghosts do not have bodies like him, asked for something to eat, and ate a piece of fish.

42-07

What did Jesus say would happen in God's word?

Jesus explained that everything said about Jesus in God's word would certainly happen.

What enabled the disciples to understand God's word?

Jesus made them understand God's word better.

What did Jesus say the prophets wrote about the Messiah?

Jesus explained that the prophets predicted the Messiah would suffer, die, and rise again on the third day.

42-08

What was the message that Jesus' disciples were to proclaim?

They would proclaim God's message that everyone should repent so that God would forgive their sins.

Where were Jesus' disciples to proclaim this message?

They would proclaim it first in Jerusalem, and then go to all people groups everywhere.

What were the disciples to be witnesses of?

The disciples were witnesses of all that Jesus said, all that he did, and all that happened to him.

42-09

How long did Jesus continue to appear to the disciples?

He appeared to them many times during the next 40 days.

How big was the largest group of disciples that saw Jesus during this time?

He appeared to more than 500 disciples at the same time.

What were some reasons Jesus appeared to his disciples?

He appeared to them to prove that he was alive and to teach them about God's kingdom.

42-10

What right did God the Father give to Jesus?

God the Father gave Jesus the right to rule over everyone in heaven and on earth.

What did Jesus command his disciples to go and do?

He told them to go and make disciples of all people groups, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything he had commanded them.

What promise did Jesus give his disciples?

Jesus promised that he would be with his disciples always.

42-11

Why did Jesus tell the disciples to wait in Jerusalem?

They were to wait until the Father gave them power when the Holy Spirit came on them.

Where did Jesus go 40 days after his resurrection?

He went up to heaven.

How did Jesus go up to heaven?

Jesus went up to heaven, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

What did Jesus do when he arrived in heaven?

He sat down at the right hand of God to rule over all things.

Movement 2: Theological Questions

Answer the following theology questions as a community. Discuss what truths this story teaches.

1. Why is it important that Jesus appeared to his disciples after his resurrection? How does this story show the importance of Jesus' post-resurrection appearances?
2. How did Jesus fulfill the promises of the prophets? In what ways does this story prove that Jesus is the Messiah predicted by the Old Testament Scriptures?
3. What is the mission of Jesus' disciples? What does this story teach us about Jesus' mission in the world and how Jesus' disciples can fulfill this mission?

Movement 3: Live It Out

Personal Implications & Applications From The Story

Guide the group to discuss practical obedience from this story and name concrete next steps.

1. What feelings might you be having if you were one of the two disciples walking toward the nearby town? Which of their experiences and feelings can you relate to?
2. In what ways have you encountered the power and presence of the resurrected Jesus?
3. How does this true story help you overcome fears, doubts, and uncertainty in your own life?
4. Think about this week. Where does "Jesus Returns to Heaven" challenge you to obey God in a practical way?
5. How does this key idea shape one decision you need to make right now: The story of Jesus returning to heaven teaches us that Jesus really rose from the dead by showing himself to his disciples and gave them a mission to preach the gospel to all people groups in the world.

Movement 4: Retell the Story

Invite the group to retell the story several times until they can tell it clearly and faithfully.

1. Can someone retell "Jesus Returns to Heaven" from beginning to end in their own words?
2. Retell this story again, but focus on what God did at each key moment.
3. Retell the story in three parts: beginning, middle, and ending. What changed in each part?
4. If you were teaching this story to your family tonight, how would you tell it simply and clearly?

Church Ministry

Reflect on how this story can edify and mature the Christian community. Design a way to minister this story to your church community.

Ministry Preparation: Take time to consider how you could minister this story to others. Record some ministry ideas below.

Ministry Implementation: Minister this story to a group of believers as you had planned. Use the information in this study to help develop a teaching/lesson or lead a discussion of this story with other believers. Record your ministry plan below.

Ministry Reflection: Think about what you learned from ministering this story to other believers. Reflect on your experience below.

Movement 5: Share It

Help each person plan how they will share this story with others before the next gathering.

1. Who is one specific person you will share "Jesus Returns to Heaven" with this week?
2. When and where will you share this story with them?
3. What is the one main truth from this story you want them to remember? Report-back next meeting: Who did you share with, and what happened?

Report-back next meeting: Who did you share with, and what happened?

Mission Engagement

Consider how you will witness this story to unbelievers. Design a way to share this story and engage them in what it teaches about Christianity and the gospel.

Witness Preparation: Take time to consider how you will witness this narrative to unbelievers. Record some ideas below.

Witness Implementation: Share this story with an unbeliever. Use the information in this study to help develop a teaching/lesson or lead a discussion of this story with other believers. Record your ministry plan below.

Witness Reflection: Think about what you learned from ministering this story to unbelievers. Reflect on your experience below.