



**Week 2: November 10-16**

10min

Welcome / Introduce Guests  
Celebrate! / Open in Prayer / Recall the Guidelines

2min

**Share the Vision: What is the mission of our group? How is our goal bigger than a weekly meeting?**

4min

**Hook Question:** Who can join us for the annual Thanksgiving Meal & Service on November 24<sup>th</sup> at Western Hills Church? If 7 or more of us are going should we reserve a table so our group can sit together?

5min

**Ask someone from your team to read or tell the following background for the story:**

Let's continue our new series called *Our Great Hope: Finding Peace in the Wonders of God*. This week we are focusing on God's power. The Bible teaches that God is all-powerful, or omnipotent.

Today's story takes place thousands of years ago near the beginning of the conception of the nation of Israel. God made a covenant with the nation of Israel. As part of that covenant, God pledged to Israel that they would inherit a land of promise. When Israel was in bondage in Egypt, God raised them up and delivered them from captivity. He set them on a path towards this Promised Land. Now, after many years, the time had finally come for Israel to inherit the land. Wicked, evil nations inhabited the land. God gave the Israelites favor in conquest so that they could cleanse the land of the wicked nations and establish the land as their own. Because of this, God blessed Israel in their warfare and their campaign to take the land.

Today's story narrows down to one of the many battles as Israel entered the land of promise. Under the leadership of Joshua, God had already given Israel victories in the Promised Land. The wicked nations in that land had begun to take notice. Those nations made plans to counter the efforts of the Israelites. One nation, Gibeon, tricked the Israelites into making a covenant with them. Through this trick, the Gibeonites became the allies of the Israelites. The Israelites were sworn to help protect them.

One day, five kings of five different nations took council together. They decided to join forces to come up against Gibeon and against Israel. They gathered their forces and went up with all their armies and encamped against Gibeon and made war against it. The men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua to call for his help. The five kings were rulers of great and powerful nations. Their forces completely outmatched the forces of Gibeon and Israel. The fate of God's elect nation was in jeopardy of elimination. The five nations drew their battle lines for war, prepared to annihilate God's people. This is where our story begins...

12min

**Tell the story from Joshua 10:6-15:** *Remember to change up the storyteller often.*

**Rebuild the story:** *Group members retell the story based on what they remember.*

**Read the story from Joshua 10:6-15:** *Ask the group to read these verses.*

**Discussion Questions: learn to talk about God's Word with others...**

Head Questions: Quicker tempo.

- What do you like or dislike about this story?
- What does this story teach us about people?
- What does this story teach us about God?

Heart & Hand Questions: Slow down & wait!

- What do you think God is trying to show you through this story and our discussion?
- Who could retell the story for us right here one last time?

**Thank your storyteller for sharing the Word. Ask for a volunteer storyteller for next week. Close in prayer.**



## Week 2: Loving the Lowest and the Least

Our preparation for the Holiday Season begins with a foundational principle for shepherding in Jesus's church: **to be like Jesus we must love the lowest and the least.**

### **Matthew 25:40**

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'"

Jesus was constantly found loving people who were considered to be "less than" the rest. When the disciples wanted to turn the children away, Jesus welcomed them. When Jesus encountered the Samaritan woman at the well, He spent time with her and engaged her with the truth in love. When Jesus saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion. When Jesus met Matthew the tax collector, He called him to be His disciple. When Jesus encountered a grieving Mary and Martha, He grieved with them and comforted them. When Jesus saw Zacchaeus, He decided to visit him at his home. Jesus healed the blind, the crippled, the deaf, and the mute. Jesus associated with sinners and tax collectors. Jesus called unlikely candidates to be His disciples. Yes, Jesus loved "the least of these."

As we begin our preparation for the Holiday Season, the first thing we must ask is, "Who are 'the least of these' in our group?" This could be someone who is poor, sick, grieving the loss of loved ones, homeless, without family, jobless, a single mom, a widow or widower, just had a baby, just went through a major life change, etc. Sometimes, someone is "the least of these" for a short season. Some people, because of their condition, will always be one of "the least" among us.

Once we identify those who are the lowest and the least in our group, we become more aware of their needs so we can lead our group to love them well. This is a blessing not only to them but to our entire group! Loving people and meeting their needs is not just something we do as believers; it is who we are! Loving others is not just a blessing to those we love... it is also a blessing to us.

The main goal in our groups this Holiday Season is that no one would spend the holidays alone, no genuine need would go unmet, and that every person would feel loved and included as part of the family this Holiday Season. Start thinking about Thanksgiving and Christmas. Who are the least of these in your group? How does your group need to love them?