

**Week Two: *Master Your Stories***  
***Matthew 16:21-28***

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day One**

1. Read Matthew 16:21-28. What was Jesus trying to explain to his disciples?
2. How do you generally take bad news about someone you love?
3. What detail did Jesus include at the end of verse 21? Judging by his reaction do you think Peter missed that part, didn't understand it, or something else?
4. How do you think Peter's reaction was impacted by his personal knowledge of the chief priests and the teachers of the law? In other words, what kind of story might Peter have imagined when he heard this news?
5. How might Peter's mental story have impacted how he received Jesus' announcement?
6. End your FIFTEEN by reflecting on a time where you have allowed a mental story to impact how you received news, whether good or bad. Finish by asking God to help you recognize when you have allowed your own personal story to get in the way.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Two**

7. A few years ago, a coworker of mine received flowers at work from her husband. Knowing that it wasn't her birthday, several people asked her what the occasion was. When she told them that he just wanted to send her flowers, person after person replied, "What did he do?" It wasn't long before I heard her say, "It's our anniversary!" Describe an example when a seemingly harmless act seemed to suggest a different backstory. Were you correct in your assumption?
8. Look again at Matthew 16:21-28. What did Jesus say that Peter was focused on verse 23?
9. Read Colossians 3:1-3. Is it easy for you to look at the events in your life from a godly perspective, or are you more apt to see things from a human point of view? Explain your answer.
10. Brainstorm a list of ways that you can shift your focus toward God's perspective.
11. Look again at verse 26, then look over your list. Which ways are the hardest for you? Which ones come more naturally to you? Which ones would you most benefit from doing?

12. As you finish your FIFTEEN in prayer, ask God to help you take the steps you have outlined today.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Three**

13. When you think about the family you grew up in, was there an implied story about the way your life should unfold? How did that story impact your life?

14. Read John 2:1-5. What does this narrative seem to suggest Mary understood about her son?

15. What did Jesus' reaction to his mother's request say about her understanding?

16. If you think about the story of your family of origin, does it still have power over your life? Is it mostly positive or negative now? Does it need to change?

17. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. How does knowing that even Jesus dealt with unmet expectations with his family make you feel about your own relationship with your family?

18. As you finish your FIFTEEN in prayer, talk to Jesus about the role the stories of others may play in your life, whether good or bad. Keep in mind, he can empathize with you in every way.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Four**

19. Look again at Matthew 16:21-28. As we saw this, we don't know what mental story Mary had written about Jesus or her understanding of his true purpose. But we can see from the disciples' example that even when Jesus tried to tell them straight out, it was too much for them to grasp. What made those words so difficult for Peter to make sense of?

20. Look at the reaction of two of Jesus' disciples after his death but before they had heard the news of his resurrection in Luke 24:13-27. What was the story that these disciples constructed around the events of Jesus' death?

21. According to verse 27, what did Jesus do?

22. The disciples on the road to Emmaus had constructed a story that was rewritten when Jesus died. The only conclusion that they could come up with was that he was not who they'd hoped he'd be. Where did Jesus need to begin his story in order to explain who he was?

23. How does knowing the whole story help us see a more accurate picture?

24. Stories are incredibly powerful. Which means partial or inaccurate stories can be very destructive. How can we make sure we have the whole story of the events in our lives?
25. Finish your FIFTEEN by asking God to help you to be open to the whole story and not focused on just one part.

**Spend FIFTEEN – Day Five**

26. One of my favorite television shows growing up was *Scooby Doo*, an animated series that featured four teenagers and their dog solving mysteries. Predictable missteps and foibles happened as the group went about gathering clues. In the end, the mystery was always solved when a nefarious backstory was revealed, which the viewer had not been privy to. Watching as an adult, it is obvious that this is a terrible way to write a mystery. Why is understanding the backstory so important to understanding motive?
27. Read about one of Jesus' miraculous healings in John 9:1-34 and answer the following questions:
- What assumption did the disciples make in the man's backstory in vs. 2?
  - How did Jesus answer the disciples' question?
  - What story did the unbelieving neighbors concoct?
  - How did the Pharisees explain what had happened in vs. 16?
  - What did the man's parents fear in vs. 22?
  - What facts did the man present in vs. 25-34?
  - What conclusion did the Pharisees finally come to?
28. Looking at the facts, a powerful story emerges and we know how powerful a story can be. As he saw the facts, the man could not deny that there is something more to Jesus than any man he'd ever met. And yet the Pharisees clung to the only story they would accept: this man was a sinner and Jesus was a threat. Have you ever clung so tightly to a narrative that you refused to see the facts as they unfolded? If so, how did you gain a fresh perspective?
29. Finish your FIFTEEN by asking God to help you see the story he is writing in your life through his eyes.