



## PRE-GATHERING BIBLE STUDY

### Introduction

When the National Planning Committee (NPC) was searching for a theme for CLAY 2018, we discussed many possibilities. In those conversations, we heard stories from people about joy, brokenness, laughter, pain and healing, about tears, our faith and even loss. When we considered all of these individual stories, we realized that they were all so unique, but God honours each of our voices and each of our stories with mercy, grace and love.

The Bible is God's story and Jesus is our link to it. Christ calls us, with our own stories, and invites us to be a part of God's story, and in doing so we help continue God's story beyond the Bible—in our own words and actions today and tomorrow. As children of God, we are threads that when woven together make this wonderful world come alive with texture and colour and warmth.

So let us look closely at God's story and at our own. Our hope for CLAY 2018 is that we can all truly come together from across Canada, to discern our own stories and to offer a piece of ourselves to create a tapestry of life called threads in Thunder Bay.

We invite you to explore your thoughts and feelings around the theme, threads. Feel free to do it as one study or break into small groups around each of the three study sessions so that everyone has an opportunity to participate and contribute. It works great as a time to prepare your home team as you travel to Thunder Bay, Ontario! Do whatever works best for your group and adapt it for your own context in your geography, demographic or community. We are SO excited to meet everyone at CLAY 2018 in August! Enjoy your time preparing for this fantastic event, safe travels as you come to join us in Thunder Bay and we'll see you when you get there!

— 2018 NPC —

## God's Story FOR Us

### 2 Timothy 3:14–17

*But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*



The Bible is filled with stories. From scripture to history to parables. These stories teach us about God, how to learn from both good and bad examples, and to give us encouragement in trying or questioning times. God has given these stories for us and for our benefit in striving to live a good and faithful life.

### What's The Story?

What bible story(s) do you remember or really like? Is it one that you remember from Sunday Church School or your childhood? Share that story now with others and let them know why it holds special meaning for you or what it teaches you about God, life or yourself. Does it remind you of a particular time or occurrence in your life? Do you remember a family tradition around reading stories from the Bible? Listen respectfully to each person's story and think about how their story relates to yours.

## God's Story OF Us

### Psalms 139: 13–15

*For it was you who formed my inward parts;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works;  
that I know very well.  
My frame was not hidden from you,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.*

In many instances in the bible, we hear about God's creations—from the heavens and earth to all of its creatures, including the many generations of humanity. Our own story is a modern-day part of that creation story and, as indicated in Psalm 139, each of us is a special part in God's grand scheme of the world. Part of growing in faith is learning about yourself and others around you and understanding why God has called you into the world.

### **What's The Story?**

Can you think of a time in your life when it seemed like things were going along without you? Where things were happening that were unbelievably good or horribly bad, or just too weird to be real? Was it a time when you learned something about yourself that you didn't know or realize before that moment?



## **God's Story WITH Us**

### **Deuteronomy 11:18–19**

*You shall put these words of mine in your heart and soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and fix them as an emblem on your forehead. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.*

When we read the scriptures or hear the scriptures or learn from the scriptures, we carry a small piece of God with us, just as Christ carried God with him. God becomes woven into us and us into God. In so doing, we allow others to see Christ in us and for them to also see the story of our faith. There is no greater calling in our daily lives than sharing of ourselves with others and, in so doing, we keep God alive in the world today.

### **What's The Story?**

There can be moments in our everyday lives when we see God around us or realize that we are a part of something greater. CLAY provides a unique opportunity for us to be close to God; on our own, together with other individuals or groups, and even all together in the Large Group Gatherings. There are many “a-ha” moments at CLAY. Maybe it is making a new friend. Perhaps it is learning something new about yourself. It can even be learning to see God in the world around you—in nature, in a person, or even just as a feeling or emotion.

Talk in your group about how or where you see God in your everyday lives, or perhaps how you have experienced God on a particular occasion. Was it at church or at school or somewhere else altogether? Maybe it was totally unexpected or maybe it happened at the last CLAY gathering, if you attended in 2016. Can you give an example of when you felt God definitely was there—or definitely wasn't there—at a moment in your life? Listen for common threads in the stories and consider how this illustrates the presence of Christ woven into each of our lives individually and together as a people of God.

Lastly, discuss how you hope to encounter God at threads in Thunder Bay and how you can show others at CLAY part of your faith story.