

**know** *your story*

**share** *your story*

**workbook**

# Have you ever wondered how you can share why you believe what you do to others?

Today, as our culture has changed, it is more difficult than in years past and even discouraged to have public conversations about “personal” faith. However, the Bible is not quiet about this issue. It is clear from the example of the early Church in Acts, that we are called to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others.

It has become popular today to say “Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary, use words.” But scripture says “Beautiful are the feet who bring good news” (*Isaiah 52:7 and Romans 10:15*). The apostle Peter even encourages the recipient of his first letter, “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (*1 Peter 3:15*).

This study is designed with the hope of helping you explore how God has shaped your story, to give you hope in Jesus and how we can share that story with others in relationship. Using Biblical examples but understanding today’s culture, we will learn how to do what Peter encourages.

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# Week 1

## Seeing Your Own Story

One of the most important parts of being able to share your faith is to be aware of what God is doing in your own life. If you are blind to what God is doing in and around you, you will not be able to “give the reason for the hope that you have.” When did you first remember encountering God in Jesus Christ? Who had an impact on that encounter before and after? How did your hope grow after those initial encounters? In this session, we will explore these questions and more in order to help us see God in our own stories.

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# Week 1: Biblical Stories

## Acts 22:1-21

<sup>1</sup>“Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense.”

<sup>2</sup>When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet.

Then Paul said: <sup>3</sup>“I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. <sup>4</sup>I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, <sup>5</sup>as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus, and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

<sup>6</sup>“About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. <sup>7</sup>I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, ‘Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?’

<sup>8</sup>“Who are you, Lord?’ I asked.

“I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,’ he replied. <sup>9</sup>My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.

<sup>10</sup>“What shall I do, Lord?’ I asked.

“Get up,’ the Lord said, ‘and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.’ <sup>11</sup>My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

<sup>12</sup>“A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout

observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. <sup>13</sup>He stood beside me and said, ‘Brother Saul, receive your sight!’ And at that very moment I was able to see him.

<sup>14</sup>“Then he said: ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. <sup>15</sup>You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. <sup>16</sup>And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.’

<sup>17</sup>“When I returned to Jerusalem and was praying at the temple, I fell into a trance <sup>18</sup>and saw the Lord speaking to me. ‘Quick!’ he said. ‘Leave Jerusalem immediately, because the people here will not accept your testimony about me.’

<sup>19</sup>“Lord,’ I replied, ‘these people know that I went from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat those who believe in you. <sup>20</sup>And when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I stood there giving my approval and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.’

<sup>21</sup>“Then the Lord said to me, ‘Go; I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’”

## Acts 26:2-23

<sup>2</sup>“King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, <sup>3</sup>and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

<sup>4</sup>“The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my

own country, and also in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee. <sup>6</sup>And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. <sup>7</sup>This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me. <sup>8</sup>Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

<sup>9</sup>I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>10</sup>And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord's people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. <sup>11</sup>Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.

<sup>12</sup>“On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. <sup>13</sup>About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. <sup>14</sup>We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’

<sup>15</sup>“Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’

“I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. <sup>16</sup>‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. <sup>17</sup>I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them <sup>18</sup>to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

<sup>19</sup>“So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. <sup>20</sup>First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the

Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds.

<sup>21</sup>That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. <sup>22</sup>But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen— <sup>23</sup>that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”

## Reflection Questions

- 1) What do these passages convey about Paul's story?
- 2) How did Paul see the story of his life?
- 3) What key moments does Paul include in his story and why?

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# A Few Pointers (Watch Video 1)

What \_\_\_\_\_ do you use?

How do you understand \_\_\_\_\_ work?

How is your \_\_\_\_\_ different today?

What is the \_\_\_\_\_ that is in you?

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# Practice: Defining Your Story

What is one of your earliest memories of encountering Jesus? This may be in the kindness of someone else, a Bible study, reading the Bible on your own, a sermon, or anything that made you recognize that Jesus loves you and that He is still relevant in your life today.

What impact did that experience have on you at the time? How does it still have an impact on you today?

Are there any other moments in your life where you can look back and see they had an impact on why you believe in Jesus today (these can even be times of doubt or struggle)?

What people or organizations, including people you personally knew or whose books you've read, were significant to the growth of that hope you have in Jesus?

## Practice: Defining Your Story (Continued)

What ways have you felt like God has called you to serve the world God has created and/or the Church? How did that call happen (eg: through a conversation, reading, sermon, prayer, etc)?

How have you regularly recognized God's action in your life (eg: through prayer, through other people, through events/information that coincide too coincidentally, etc)?

How would you describe the hope you have in Jesus in your own words? (ie: what is the hope?, why do you have that hope?, why does that provide you hope?).

Name as many ways this hope has changed your life (eg: I am more patient, I have made it through difficult times, I have learned to love others more than myself, etc.).



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# Practice: Timeline of Your Story

Use the line below to make a timeline of your story with God. Feel free to be as colorful as you want and draw pictures or just use words to highlight special moments.



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## Week 2

# Speaking Your Story

Language is important. Language is a conduit to communicating a shared experience within a culture. We learn words as Christians that help express a common Christian experience and this is not a bad thing. When talking with others outside of our Christian experience, those words mean a lot less. We have to adopt more common words as we share our story making it as comprehensible as possible. God used the language of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek to record the story of how God has acted in creation. How do we translate our experience to others like scripture has been translated for us today?

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## Week 2: Biblical Stories

### Acts 17:22-33

<sup>22</sup>Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. <sup>23</sup>For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

<sup>24</sup>“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. <sup>25</sup>And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. <sup>26</sup>From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. <sup>27</sup>God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. <sup>28</sup>‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’

<sup>29</sup>“Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. <sup>30</sup>In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. <sup>31</sup>For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

<sup>32</sup>When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, “We want to hear you again on this subject.” <sup>33</sup>At that, Paul left the Council.

<sup>34</sup>Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the

Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

### Acts 2:1-12

<sup>1</sup>When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. <sup>2</sup>Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. <sup>3</sup>They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. <sup>4</sup>All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

<sup>5</sup>Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. <sup>6</sup>When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard their own language being spoken. <sup>7</sup>Utterly amazed, they asked: “Aren’t all these who are speaking Galileans?” <sup>8</sup>Then how is it that each of us hears them in our native language? <sup>9</sup>Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, <sup>10</sup>Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome <sup>11</sup>(both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” <sup>12</sup>Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”

## Reflection Questions

1) What do these stories tell us about the use of language in God's story?

2) What are the techniques Paul uses in Acts 17?

3) How does our language shape how we see our stories?

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# A Few Pointers (Watch Video 2)

All words need \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ vs \_\_\_\_\_

Know the \_\_\_\_\_

Know the \_\_\_\_\_

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# Practice: Identify Your Christianese

List all the words you use that are specific to Christianity.

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# Practice: Your Five Minute Testimony

None of us can know how long we might have to share our story with someone else. It is good to have a short version and also a long version. On these two pages, write what you would say if you had five minutes to share your story with someone.

# Practice: Your Five Minute Testimony (Continued)



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## Week 3

# Connecting Your Story

Everyone is busy these days and not many people are concerned with forming meaningful new relationships. How do we make connections with others to see God at work in those we are called to love? In some ways it is easier than ever with websites that help people connect with common interests. What ways can we each make connections with people outside of the Church? This process must also be Spirit led, so that we walk into the opportunities God has made for us to love and serve others as Jesus did.

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# Week 3: Biblical Stories

## Acts 8:26-40

<sup>26</sup>Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” <sup>27</sup>So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian[a] eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, <sup>28</sup>and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of Isaiah the prophet. <sup>29</sup>The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.”

<sup>30</sup>Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?” Philip asked.

<sup>31</sup>“How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

<sup>32</sup>This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,  
and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,  
so he did not open his mouth.

<sup>33</sup>In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.  
Who can speak of his descendants?  
For his life was taken from the earth.”

<sup>34</sup>The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” <sup>35</sup>Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus.

<sup>36</sup>As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can stand in the way of my being baptized?” <sup>38</sup>And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went

down into the water and Philip baptized him. <sup>39</sup>When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. <sup>40</sup>Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

## Acts 17:2

As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

## Acts 10:1-8, 17-26

At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion in what was known as the Italian Regiment. <sup>2</sup>He and all his family were devout and God-fearing; he gave generously to those in need and prayed to God regularly. <sup>3</sup>One day at about three in the afternoon he had a vision. He distinctly saw an angel of God, who came to him and said, “Cornelius!”

<sup>4</sup>Cornelius stared at him in fear. “What is it, Lord?” he asked.

The angel answered, “Your prayers and gifts to the poor have come up as a memorial offering before God. <sup>5</sup>Now send men to Joppa to bring back a man named Simon who is called Peter. <sup>6</sup>He is staying with Simon the tanner, whose house is by the sea.”

<sup>7</sup>When the angel who spoke to him had gone, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier who was one of his attendants. <sup>8</sup>He told them everything that had

happened and sent them to Joppa.

<sup>17</sup>While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. <sup>18</sup>They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

<sup>19</sup>While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you. <sup>20</sup>So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

<sup>21</sup>Peter went down and said to the men, "I'm the one you're looking for. Why have you come?"

<sup>22</sup>The men replied, "We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and God-fearing man, who is respected by all the Jewish people. A holy angel told him to ask you to come to his house so that he could hear what you have to say." <sup>23</sup>Then Peter invited the men into the house to be his guests.

The next day Peter started out with them, and some of the believers from Joppa went along. <sup>24</sup>The following day he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his relatives and close friends. <sup>25</sup>As Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and fell at his feet in reverence. <sup>26</sup>But Peter made him get up. "Stand up," he said, "I am only a man myself.

## Reflection Questions

- 1) What patterns do you see in these stories about the first disciples sharing the good news of Jesus?
  
- 2) How does Philip engage the Ethiopian? What principles are there for us?
  
- 3) How does Peter address the Centurion and his servants? What principles are there for us?

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## A Few Pointers (Watch Video 3)

Who has God \_\_\_\_\_ in your life?

Be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Use your natural \_\_\_\_\_

Be willing to \_\_\_\_\_ from them

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## Practice: List Those Already In Your Life

These could be family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, or anyone else we know who do not have the hope we have in Christ.

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# Practice: List Your Interests

What hobbies do you already have? What things are you interested in learning more about?

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## Practice: Write About a Time You Learned

How do we come from a humble stance? Assume we don't know everything and assume God is already in a person's life or in a situation before you are. Love the person above the idea of "converting" them. Seeking to learn from those we connect with helps us to earn trust that we care about them first and foremost. Use this space to write about a time you learned from someone who does not hope in Jesus yet.

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# Week 4

## Listening to Others' Stories

If we want to earn the right to have our stories heard, we need to be willing to listen to the stories of others. We need to do this as an authentic way of caring about them as a person. Not seeing them as an object but as a person who we are called to love. Once the person knows you care more about them than about fulfilling some obligation to your own faith, they will listen to your story. Listening will also help us to understand our story in a way that others may hear it because we'll know the language that will connect with how God is in their story.

### Lesson Outline:

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# Week 4: Biblical Stories

## Acts 18:1-4

<sup>1</sup>After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. <sup>2</sup>There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, <sup>3</sup>and, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they worked together—by trade they were tentmakers. <sup>4</sup>Every sabbath he would argue in the synagogue and would try to convince Jews and Greeks.

## 1 Corinthians 9:8-22

<sup>8</sup>Do I say this on human authority? Does not the law also say the same? <sup>9</sup>For it is written in the law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.” Is it for oxen that God is concerned? <sup>10</sup>Or does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was indeed written for our sake, for whoever plows should plow in hope and whoever threshes should thresh in hope of a share in the crop. <sup>11</sup>If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits? <sup>12</sup>If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we still more?

Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. <sup>13</sup>Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is sacrificed on the altar? <sup>14</sup>In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

<sup>15</sup>But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing this so that they may be applied in my case. Indeed, I would rather die than that—no one will deprive me of

my ground for boasting! <sup>16</sup>If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel!

<sup>17</sup>For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. <sup>18</sup>What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel.

<sup>19</sup>For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them.

<sup>20</sup>To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. <sup>21</sup>To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law) so that I might win those outside the law. <sup>22</sup>To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some.

## Romans 9:1-5

<sup>1</sup>I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience confirms it by the Holy Spirit— <sup>2</sup>I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. <sup>3</sup>For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my own people, my kindred according to the flesh. <sup>4</sup>They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; <sup>5</sup>to them belong the patriarchs, and from them, according to the flesh, comes the Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

## Reflection Questions

1) Why are we reading about tent making and getting paid for preaching the gospel? What is the principle in these three passages that speaks to our endeavor in sharing our stories?

2) What was Paul's heart in all these situations?

3) Do you have this same heart for those who do not have a hope in Jesus yet? How do you develop this heart?

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# A Few Pointers (Watch Video 4)

\_\_\_\_\_ motives won't work

Care more about the \_\_\_\_\_ than the \_\_\_\_\_

See \_\_\_\_\_ already at work

\_\_\_\_\_ twice as much as you \_\_\_\_\_

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# Practice: God at Work

Use the space below to list every area of your life like; 1) Work, 2) Family, 3) Friends, etc. In each of these areas of your life, spend some time in prayer asking the Spirit to show you where God is working. Write what you receive about how God is moving in all these places.

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# Practice: Neighborhood Exegesis

This activity must be done ahead of class in order for us to discuss it. You can find the document “Neighborhood Exegesis” at [http://pastorchristhomas.com/Neighborhood\\_Exegesis.pdf](http://pastorchristhomas.com/Neighborhood_Exegesis.pdf). Please do this exercise before week 4 and write your observations here and the following pages to share during class.