

Session one

God's story

Aim

By the end of this session group members should be able to:

- Understand the power of stories.
- Consider and reflect on the barriers and reluctances in their own lives when thinking about sharing faith.
- Begin to construct and articulate the heart of what God's story is.



Before the session...

Read: Story Bearer - Chapters 1-5

Welcome

Match the opening lines of the following stories in books or films:

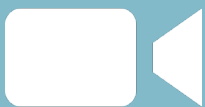
- When he was nearly thirteen, my brother Jem got his arm badly broken at the elbow.
(To Kill a Mockingbird)
- Once upon a time, there was a lovely princess. But she had an enchantment upon her of a fearful sort, which could only be broken by love's first kiss. (Shrek)

- It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife. (Pride and Prejudice)
- Whenever I get gloomy with the state of the world, I think about the arrival's gate at Heathrow airport. (Love Actually)
- Mr and Mrs Dursley of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much. (Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone)
- Mmm. I look good. I mean, really good. Hey, everyone! Come and see how good I look! (Anchorman)

Discuss

- What was the first film you ever saw?
- What were the stories, cartoons and TV shows you remember watching when you were a child?

This small group series is about helping us become the most effective we can be in helping us share our faith with our friends. It is based on the premise that evangelism can be relational, natural and a lot easier than we might initially thought. And it is all about bearing a story. This session is an introduction to stories. By the end of it we will have considered what the Christian story is and what we might say if someone asked us what Christianity is all about.



Watch...

The Author - <https://youtu.be/cbaM51CvQac>



Read...

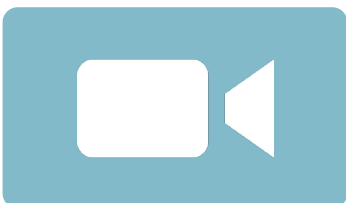
The Bible - Luke 15: 1-32

Discuss

- In Story Bearer, chapter 2 – Contagious, Phil describes the reasons why many people find sharing their faith a struggle and why the Christian message fails to spread through friendship. Which of the following barriers do you resonate with the most and why?
 - Proximity – lack of meaningful contact with people who need to hear the story.
 - Potency – lack of trust in the power of the story.
 - Reluctance – not wanting to share the story.
 - Opportunity – lack of meaningful chances to share the story.
- What are the ways you think you can overcome some of these barriers?
- In chapter 3, Phil talks about the words that others spoke to him while he was growing up and their impact. What have been the words in your life that you remember, that both built you up and knocked you down?
- Chapter 4 is an overview of the story of God. If you were a 'Bible Tour Guide', what are the major places that you would take your group on the journey? Why are these moments important to you?
- Luke 15 gives us a few stories in which Jesus crystallises the essence of his message. What are the key components of these stories? What other moments in the Bible do you know of that do this?

Activity

Explain that one of the aims of this session is for each group member to a bearer of God's story and that the purpose of this activity is to consider how we might articulate and remember it.



Watch...

Falling Plates - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGIx11BxF24>



Read this extract from Story Bearer...

I am not going to give you a set formula of how you might squash and squeeze the story of God into a short summary, but allow you to choose something that suits your personality and context. You may find that using the four simple truths work best for you, or the story of the prodigal, or a personal anecdote like 'Caleb and the broken coffee cup.' My encouragement to you is to have at least one way of answering the question, which may be to your friend the most important words they ever hear. (Story Bearer p. 46.)

In the book, Phil gives a few examples of stories and of how to tell God's story. The video gives us another perspective of the Gospel. In groups of 2 or 3 discuss how you would answer the questions: 'What is the Christian faith all about? Can you explain it to me?' It might be helpful for members to write down the key points or even their answer in full.

Then allow opportunity for a few people to feedback to the wider group what they would say if one of their friends asked them these questions. The answer should be as natural as possible. You are not giving a talk or delivering a speech, but explaining naturally in relational conversation. The tone and length of the answer should reflect this. Encourage group members to work on trying to remember God's story this week and even practising being prepared what to say if explaining the good news to someone. Explain that, without pressure or duress (!!), there will be an opportunity for people to have a go at what they have practised at the beginning of the next session.

Response

It is so important to us as Christians to never lose the wonder of the story of God and to know that we play our part in it today. At the end of Session 1 there is a moment to reflect on this for ourselves.

Psalms 145 encapsulates so much of our aims in this session.



Read Psalm 145:3-6...

Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise;

His greatness no one can fathom.

One generation commends your works to another; They will tell of your mighty acts.

*They speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty –
And I will meditate on your wonderful works.*

They tell of the power of your awesome works –

And I will proclaim your great deeds.

Encourage the group to find this passage in their Bibles. Take a moment of reflection to read it slowly and quietly. You may like to play some worship music in the background as you do.

Pray

Father, thank you for your story.

Thank you that through it we get to know the Author better.

Help us to be Story Bearers, good news people in a bad news world, and give us courage and confidence to bear your story well to those around us.

May we do this with the lives that we live and with the story we live out with our lives and actions.

Amen.