

Session two

Your story

Aim

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

- Tell their story of the difference Jesus makes in their life.
- It really is as simple as that.



Before the session...

Read: Story Bearer - Chapters 6-7

Recap

Offer an opportunity to anyone who wants to show off their homework, having practised God's story, to share what they have done with the rest of the group.

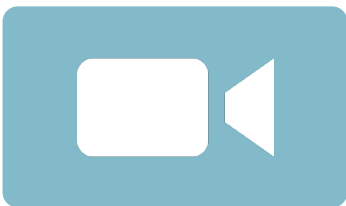
Welcome

This is a simple game to get you talking about some of the key moments in your life. Pour a packet of Skittles in a bowl and pass around. Encourage each group member to, without looking, pick a Skittle out the bowl and answer the question below that corresponds to its colour:

- Red What is your most embarrassing moment?
- Orange What was your first job?
- Yellow What is the hardest thing you have ever had to do?
- Green Describe two people who have made a big difference in your life. Purple – What are you most proud of?

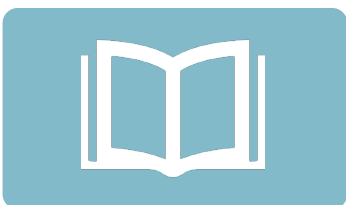
Continue for as long as you like. If duplicates are pulled out, alternative questions can be chosen.

In this session we are going to explore the implications of the key verse at the heart of Story Bearer, which challenges us to always give a reason for the hope that we have. We are all formed by the experiences in our lives. We all have a story to tell. And if we are a Christian, we can recognise the impact God has had on our story and He can use our story to help others on their journey of faith. This session is about capturing our story, finding the best language to tell it and gaining the confidence to be ready to share it clearly and naturally with our friends.



Watch...

Phil's story - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aQxsjr-fBCQ&feature=youtu.be>



Read...

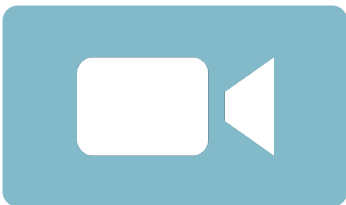
The Bible - 1 Peter 3:8-16

Discuss

- In Story Bearer, Phil describes in hyperbole the youth events he used to go to where the most astonishing and extreme stories would be told by people whose lives had been changed by Jesus. Did this resonate with you? Have there been times when you have felt your story has been very ordinary compared to others? How did this make you feel?
- Can you describe moments where you had an opportunity to share your faith and it went well? What happened? What do you feel you did well?
- Can you describe moments where you had an opportunity to share your faith and it went badly? What happened? What did you learn from the experience?
- How might capturing, knowing and being well rehearsed in your story help you in sharing your story?

Activity

Explain that the sole aim of this session is for each group member to a bearer of their own story and that the purpose of this activity is to consider how we might articulate and remember it.



Watch...

How to tell your story - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxkLiF59QR0&feature=youtu.be>

Encourage each group member to take a piece of A4 paper each and write out their story. The central question to consider is 'If someone asked you, "Why are you a Christian?" what would you say?' Phil's exhortation in Story Bearer is to tell your story in response to this question.

It may be helpful to turn to pages 55-57 of Story Bearer to complete this exercise - 'Yes, but

how?', answering the questions:

- ***When were the times you knew God was real?***
- ***What would your life be like without Jesus in it?***
- ***How does faith give you a way of understanding the world?***
- ***When have you known God to be close?***

It may also be useful to consider the following words and others to articulate what difference following Jesus makes:

- **Purpose**
- **Meaning**
- **Forgiveness**
- **Freedom**
- **Love**
- **Family**
- **Wholeness**
- **Acceptance**
- **Identity**

Take some time to complete this exercise as individuals, but encourage group members to discuss with others the process they are going through if it is helpful. Give as much time as is practical to this important exercise.

Once people have done this, offer members the opportunity to share with the group. Ask them to imagine they are in a conversation with a non-Christian friend and they have the opportunity to share their story. This will take some courage, even in a safe space like your group, so be generous in your feedback.

As with God's story in Session 1, encourage group members to work on trying to remember their story this week and even practising being prepared what to say if explaining why they are a follower of Jesus to a friend. Explain that, again, 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

For most of us, life is a mixture of highs and lows, and everything in between. This time is an opportunity to thank God for being there in the whole of life and see his signature across the whole of our story.

Ask each group member to take a piece of paper and draw out a timeline of some or all of their life with the high moments forming mountaintops and the low moments forming valleys. For most of us, the majority of life is lived on the plains, between the extremes.



Read...

The Bible - Psalm 107: 1-15

*¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
his love endures forever.*

*² Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story— those he
redeemed from the hand of the foe,*

*³ those he gathered from the lands,
from east and west, from north and south.*

*⁴ Some wandered in desert wastelands,
finding no way to a city where they could settle.*

⁵ They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away.

*⁶ Then they cried out to the LORD in their trouble, and he
delivered them from their distress.*

*⁷ He led them by a straight way
to a city where they could settle.*

*⁸ Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for mankind,*

*⁹ for he satisfies the thirsty
and fills the hungry with good things.*

*¹⁰ Some sat in darkness, in utter darkness, prisoners
suffering in iron chains,*

¹¹ because they rebelled against God's commands and despised the plans of the Most High.

¹² So he subjected them to bitter labor; they stumbled, and there was no one to help.

¹³ Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress.

¹⁴ He brought them out of darkness, the utter darkness, and broke away their chains.

¹⁵ Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for mankind.

Pray

Father, thank you that you are there in the very lowest moments of our lives.

Thank you that you are close to the broken hearted and you carry us through the storms.

We are also grateful for the highs and recognise your goodness and presence with you there as well.

Help us to reflect well on our story and see your fingerprints of faithfulness throughout.

Amen.