

# Kindness

## **BIBLE VERSE**

“Or do you despise the riches of His kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God’s kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?” (Romans 2:4)

## **LEADER PREPARATION**

- Obtain a copy of the song “Kindness” written and performed by Chris Tomlin. Play it in the background as the group gathers.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The focus verse is from the book of Romans, one of the 13 epistles penned by the Apostle Paul. The book of Romans is described by many Bible scholars as the longest and most intensely theological of the New Testament books written by Paul. The writing took place not long before Paul’s journey to Jerusalem where he presented money collected from Gentile churches for the poor believers in Jerusalem. The letter was most likely recorded while Paul was in Corinth. Paul’s letter to the church in Rome conveys multiple messages including a reminder of the fundamental truths of the gospel and a call to church unity. In his letter, he also requests support from the Roman church for his upcoming missionary journey to Spain.

Paul is aware of the differences between Jewish and Gentile believers and the tendency for members of each group to judge the faults of others. In Romans 2, beginning with verse one and continuing through verse four, Paul’s questions serve as a call for the reader to stop and realize that the kindness of God is what led them to repentance. It is not the fear of a wrath-filled and angry judge that caused them to turn from their previous practices and beliefs. However, it was God’s love, hope, and mercy that resonated in their ears, pricked their hearts, and changed their lives forever. As we look at our own journey of faith, we find that God’s kindness is what led us to our personal salvation and not merely the fear of punishment and eternal death.

Christian music artist Chris Tomlin uses the last portion of Romans 2:4 in the chorus of his song “Kindness.” He writes, “It’s Your kindness Lord that leads us to repentance.” Yet how does the Lord display His kindness? While He has many ways of blessing us and revealing Himself to us, a common way He chooses to display His kindness is through relationships.

First and foremost, God wants a daily, growing relationship with each of us. Next, He urges us to share His love with those around us. One of the ways we can do so is through the relationships we form with other individuals. It is in these relationships we can demonstrate the acts of kindness

Christ and other believers have shown to us. Whether it is a kind word, a card, an e-mail, a meal, transportation assistance, or merely a listening ear, God provides us many ways to show His kindness to others through the relationships in our lives.

While kindness is easy to demonstrate to other believers and those we know personally, the call is for us to reach out and form relationships with those who do not believe. Your neighbors, co-workers, and people at the coffee shop or dry cleaners you frequent, need to see the kindness of a loving and caring God. As Christians we are called to demonstrate God's kindness to those around us.

## TEACHING PLAN

### Getting To Know You

To begin, have someone read Romans 2:4. Have members share the various ways God has demonstrated His kindness in their lives.

Next have members talk about the various relationships they have with other people in their lives. It could be a relationship with a family member, co-worker, friend, neighbor, etc. Ask questions about the relationship:

- How did you meet this person and how long have you known them?
- What do you know about them and how did you learn these things?
- What do they know about you?
- How often do you see this person and how much time do you spend with them?
- What types of things do you talk about with this person?
- How easy or difficult was it to get to know this person?

In addition to the individuals thought of or discussed in this activity, we all have other people in our lives. People we encounter daily or weekly at the office, at our child's sporting events, and other locations we visit as part of our weekly routines. While we may not see these individuals as people we have a relationship with, there may be one God wants you to get to know more. Think of someone in your life you see several times a week but you could not answer the questions listed above about them. What keeps you from forming a relationship with this individual? Not enough time? Is it because the individual looks, speaks, or acts differently from you?

Let's stop and look at the encounters and relationships Christ had with others and find what we can learn from His examples.

### **Do As He Has Done**

In Christ's time on earth, He encountered hundreds of people. The Bible gives details of the close relationship He had with the disciples, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. But there are other individuals that had only a brief encounter with Jesus yet their lives were affected profoundly.

Have someone read Matthew 8:14–15. The Gospels only reference Peter's mother-in-law when speaking of the time Jesus touched her hand and her fever left her. Although there is little known of any relationship Christ might have had directly with Peter's mother-in-law, we know of the relationship He had with Peter. Christ's act demonstrated kindness to Peter's mother-in-law and was also an act of kindness that impacted the entire family and demonstrated to Peter Christ's healing power.

Have someone read Mark 6:32–44. What did Jesus do for the multitude? We could make the assumption He did not have a relationship with those in the crowd. However, there is little evidence to indicate He did not recognize some of the faces in the crowd or even know some of them by name. After all, crowds followed Christ wherever He went. They listened to Him teach in the temple and on the mountainside. Some of the faces may have become familiar and conversations between a common man and the Messiah could have taken place. Not only did Christ's act of kindness impact those who were hungry and then fed, it also left an impact on the disciples with whom the Savior was seeking to teach and prepare for ministry.

Have someone read Luke 7:36–50. A woman cast out by society knelt at Jesus' feet under the scrutiny and condemnation of others but under the love and compassion of Christ. Some scholars believe the woman who washed His feet was doing so out of gratitude for the love and forgiveness she received from the Savior. Not only did Jesus refuse to treat the woman differently because of the label she was given by society, He used this opportunity to share His message of kindness with those attending the dinner, including the host.

Not in any of Christ's encounters with hurting people did He point out the individual's faults and reprimand them for not living as they should. Rather He acted out kindness and love. It was His kindness that caught everyone's attention and caused individuals to continue to come to Him for healing, for hope, and for another chance. It is His kindness that leads us to repentance.

### **ACTION PLAN**

#### **Acts of Kindness**

Ask participants if they know of an individual whose family member is sick and in need of care? Explore ways individuals in the class can reach out in kindness to the individual and the sick family member.

Does someone in the group know of a neighbor or someone else who is struggling financially and perhaps could use assistance with food and meals? Discuss the possibility of either preparing a meal or donating grocery gift cards to this individual.

Is there someone in the group who works with or encounters at the coffee shop, lunch stop, or grocery store, an individual who is often outcast because of how he looks, believes, or acts? Explore ways to reach out to this person and get to know him better. Perhaps buy him a cup of coffee, sit with him at lunch, or extend a helping hand and offer a kind word.

When choosing one or more of these acts of kindness, find a way to include a card or Scripture verse that shares God's love for the individual.

Sometimes being kind requires the courage to step outside of our comfort zones. Pray for God to give you courage to reach out to those around you who need to know the kindness of the Savior.

**LESSON BY**

Sherri Roberson is a member of First Baptist Powder Springs where she teaches a tenth grade Sunday School class and helps with the girls' retreat. She has written youth devotions for LifeWay and for World Changers at the North American Mission Board.

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# The Nations Can Know

## BIBLE VERSES

“All of our praise rises to the One who is strong enough to make you strong, exactly as preached in Jesus Christ, precisely as revealed in the mystery kept secret for so long but now an open book through the prophetic Scriptures. All the nations of the world can now know the truth and be brought into obedient belief, carrying out the orders of God, who got all this started, down to the very last letter” (Romans 16:25–26, *The Message*).

## LEADER PREPARATION

Information gathered from:

- North American Mission Board Web site, [www.4truth.net](http://www.4truth.net)
- Steve Russo’s book, *They All Can’t Be Right*

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The book of Romans is the longest, and viewed by scholars as the most intensely theological, of Paul’s 13 New Testament letters. It is believed Paul wrote this letter to the church in Rome while he was in Corinth. Paul wanted to remind the believers in Rome of some fundamental truths of the gospel. Paul uses this letter to outline, support, and defend the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A student of the esteemed teacher, the rabbi Gamaliel, Paul was intimately familiar and passionate about the Jewish faith. Yet the blinding light on the road to Damascus left the persecutor of Christians to become one who shared in the sufferings of Christ as he too was rejected by his own. Step by step and verse by verse, Paul conveys to the reader the fulfillment of God’s powerful plan to rescue those who trust Him.

Paul closes out his letter to the Roman church with greetings and encouragement as is customary in his epistles. Then in the final verses he focuses on Jesus Christ being the One revealed which was planned and promised by God since the beginning of time. His conviction of the truth and defense of it is not one intended to create arguments and dissension, but to evoke thought, discussion, and the presentation of the truth.

As if teaching these verses from Romans isn’t enough to cause the leader to pause, the subject of today’s lesson is apologetics—not exactly a topic most believers were taught through years of Vacation Bible School and church summer camp. However, do not fear. The subject of apologetics has existed for centuries and surfaces again as the merging of cultures causes many to search for deeper meaning and truth. Allow the Lord to lead as you introduce what may be new or different for some, and trust His Spirit to make something often viewed as complicated understandable.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines apologetics as, “the systematic defense and exposition of the Christian faith addressed primarily to non-Christians.”

The term *apologetics* comes from the Greek word *apologia* (απολογία), which means to speak in defense of. Christian apologetics is a field of Christian theology that aims to present a rational basis for the Christian faith, defend the faith against objections, and expose the perceived flaws of other worldviews.

The aim of apologetics is to defend the Christian faith, but this is not done by getting into a fruitless defensive argument with people. No one can win another individual to Jesus by arguing with them. However, by having an understanding of what other faiths believe and a solid grasp on what you believe as a Christian and why you believe it, you can present a logical and passionate message to those seeking truth.

## TEACHING PLAN

### The Truth

Start the lesson by reading Romans 16:25–26. Share with the group the definition provided for apologetics. Ask if anyone in the group would like to share their knowledge and understanding of apologetics.

Ask the group to define and describe what salvation is based on their own understanding. After discussion share the following information.

Salvation is made possible through the sacrificial death of Jesus.

The basis of salvation is atonement. The word *atonement* is one of the few theological words that is of English origin. The verb atone derives from the adverb at *one* and therefore means to *reconcile*.

Christian faith teaches that sin separates us from a holy God. This sin and separation began in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which was in direct disobedience to God’s instructions.

From the time of the garden and throughout the Old Testament, the blood of a sacrificed animal was used to pay the penalty of sin.

The final sacrifice was Jesus Christ, without blemish, the Passover Lamb. Read John 19:14 and 36, Romans 3:25, and 1 John 2:2.

An individual comes to salvation through belief, confession, and acceptance. Read Romans 10:9–10.

Jesus is the only way to God. Read John 14:6

Ask the group if they know what other religions believe about salvation and eternity. After discussion, share the following information from the North American Mission Board's Web site, [www.4truth.net](http://www.4truth.net).

**Islam (Muslim)**—Islam is a works-oriented religion and requires that its adherents earn their way to heaven by performing the five pillars of faith. The Qur'an teaches there is a day when everyone will stand before Allah in judgment and each person's deeds will be weighed on the scales. If your good deeds outweigh your bad deeds, you go to paradise. If your bad deeds outweigh your good deeds, you go to hell. Additionally, Muslims can never be confident of paradise because the promise of dwelling in paradise can be taken away if Allah ordains otherwise.

**Buddhism**—Buddhism is the belief system of those who follow the Buddha, the Enlightened One, a title given to its founder. Saving oneself comes by following a regimen (path or ritual) and by meditation and reciting mantras. There is no personal relationship with the Buddha or any of the *bodhisattvas* (saviors who have foregone nirvana to stay back and help others to achieve it). Worship is expressed as adoration of the Buddha and one's ancestors. Buddhists struggle to make sense of this life and to live out one's expected *dharma* (required conduct) as the painful and slow road to *moksha* (salvation) when all desire is eliminated and one achieves final and ultimate enlightenment.

**Hinduism**—There is no clear concept of salvation in Hinduism. *Moksha* (freedom from infinite being and selfhood and final self-realization of the truth) is the goal of existence. *Yoga* and meditation (especially *raja-yoga*) taught by a *guru* (religious teacher) are ways to attain *moksha*. The other valid paths for *moksha* are: the way of works (*karma marga*), the way of knowledge (*jnana marga*), or the way of love and devotion (*bhakti marga*). Hindus hope to eventually get off the cycle of reincarnation. They believe the illusion of personal existence will end and they will become one with the impersonal God.

**Mormonism**—The Mormon plan of salvation is built on the idea that all people have eternal life, but only the most faithful Mormons have godhood or enter the celestial kingdom. In order to obtain this ultimate step, Mormons must exercise faith in the God of Mormonism, its Christ, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. They must exercise repentance and be baptized in the LDS Church. Additionally, Mormons must keep the "Word of Wisdom" by abstaining from alcohol, tobacco, and caffeine, tithe to the church, attend weekly sacrament meetings, support the Mormon prophet, do temple works, and be active in their support of the church.

Now discuss what Christians believe about salvation and eternity. Have participants read the following Scriptures:

- John 3:16
  
- 1 Thessalonians 4:17

Since Christians' belief in eternity is based on what is written in the Bible, discuss what the group knows about the Bible. Share the following facts:

- Read 2 Timothy 3:16. What does it state regarding the Bible?
- It is written over a 1,500-year time span by 44 different authors in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek) and on three different continents (Asia, Africa, and Europe).
- There is more ancient manuscript evidence to support it than any 10 pieces of classical literature combined.
- No unconditional prophecy of the Bible about events to the present day has gone unfulfilled.

### **Obedient Belief**

As Christians we know God did not promise an easy road in life, but He did promise to be with us each step of the way. When Paul wrote to the church in Rome, Christianity was new and it was not being met with great acceptance in many regions.

There was a time in U.S. history when Christianity was the most common religious belief among its citizens, but times have changed. Each year the numbers of those who attend church, read the Bible, and profess to be a Christians are declining. As believers we will come into contact with individuals who object to Christianity and attack our beliefs. While the initial reaction is to return the attack, as believers we should follow the example set by our Savior. When tempted by the devil, Jesus responded with Scripture, and when questioned by the religious leaders Jesus replied with an accurate interpretation and understanding of God and His Word.

### **Orders of God**

Determine who in the group knows, works with, or comes in contact with someone of a different faith. Each of those individuals should make the time over the next week to speak with this person and find out what they believe and why. The purpose of the conversation should be one of fact-finding and information gathering and not a time of challenging the individual's faith.

During the next meeting everyone who gathered information should share it with the group. A discussion should follow on how Christianity differs from the other beliefs and Bible verses identified to support the Christian faith on each of the differences. Have the group begin to pray for the individuals who are of a different faith. Also pray for the opportunity for the group member to go back to the individual and share what they believe as a Christian.

### **LESSON BY**

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Provided by the Mission Education Team of the North American Mission Board.

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# There Is No Fear

## BIBLE VERSE

"Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9).

## LEADER PREPARATION

- Go to [www.time.com](http://www.time.com) and search for the article "What Are We Afraid Of?" by Bill Tancer, March 27, 2007.
- Information related to "Share Jesus Without Fear" is taken from the LifeWay Bible study "Share Jesus Without Fear" by William Fay & Ralph Hodge; student workbook; revised edition. For additional information go to [www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com) and do a search for "Share Jesus Without Fear."

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

One individual from the Bible who had many reasons to be concerned, anxious, and even afraid, is Joshua. Caleb and Joshua were among the men Moses sent to explore Canaan. While most of the men reported on the overwhelming size of the people who inhabited the land and the futility of Israel's attempt to conquer them, Joshua and Caleb spoke out against them. They urged the Israelite community not to be afraid of the people inhabiting the land and reminded them the Lord would go with them and defeat the other nation. (Numbers 13 and 14)

Joshua succeeded Moses and was responsible for leading the Israelites into the Promised Land. Joshua continued to face the restless and doubtful nature of the Hebrew people just as Moses did. He also faced a river that had to be crossed, a wall that had to come down, and powerful nations that had to be defeated. In the face of each obstacle and adversity, God reminded Joshua to be strong, have courage, and not to be afraid.

Throughout the Bible, God's words are for believers to take courage and not to fear.

An angel urged Joseph not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife (Matthew 1:20).

The shepherds in the field were terrified upon seeing an angel in the night sky but the heavenly messenger encouraged them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people" (Luke 2:10).

The disciples were comprised of rugged fishermen, a tax collector, and other men of strong stature, but in the middle of a windy night they were shaken to see a figure walking on the water until Christ replied, "It is I, don't be afraid" (John 6:20).

God's command to take courage and not be afraid goes beyond the history of what took place in the Bible and reaches into our lives today. He commands us not to worry about the challenges we are facing, and he instructs us to step out in faith, to open our mouths, and to share with others the saving grace of Jesus. Yet many of us would rather take a risk with our money or career than talk to someone about our relationship with the Lord. Fear of what someone might say, think, or ask grips us to the point of silence. However, God's words are the same today and carry the same power as they did thousands of years ago, "And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

## **TEACHING PLAN**

### **In Jesus Christ**

After 12 weeks of research in March 2007, Time magazine published the article "What Are We Afraid Of?"

Ask the group what they think made the list in 2007. Next, ask what the top 10 items for today might be. Share the following Top 10 fears from the 2007 article.

1. Flying
2. Intimacy
3. The dark
4. Death
5. Spiders
6. Driving
7. Love
8. God
9. Success
10. Being alone

Discuss any differences in today's fears from what the 2007 article reported. Discuss how changes in time and society have changed some of the fears we experience.

Now discuss which items from the list can be overcome through a personal relationship with Jesus.

If the same survey had been taken only among Christians, what would the Top 10 fears be?

William Fay, a former businessman with Mafia ties, is now an evangelist and author of the book *Share Jesus Without Fear*. He has rarely found more than 10 percent of any church congregation that has shared their faith within the past year. From this information, one can make a safe assumption that something Christians fear the most is witnessing and sharing their faith.

Ask the group for reasons why Christians are afraid to share their faith and list the responses. Share the four major fears reported in Fay's Bible study:

- Fear of being rejected
- Fear of not knowing enough
- Fear of offending a friend or relative
- Fear of being ridiculed or persecuted

Have someone in the group share a time when they witnessed to someone, what they said, and what the individual's response was. If no one offers to share when they witnessed to someone, have an individual share when someone witnessed to them.

Ask for volunteers to share a time when they could have witnessed to someone and did not.

### **For By His Grace**

Have someone read Joshua 1:9. Joshua was encouraged not to be afraid of nations with larger armies, nor to be anxious about leading the Israelites who had a history of wandering from their faith. Rather than focus on what he could not do, Joshua had to focus on what the Lord was going to do through him.

Too often Christians view sharing their faith as something they do on their own. Fay points out in his study, "It is not your strengths that will bring you the power to share Jesus with a lost person. It is your dependence on His power."

So where does that leave believers today when it comes to the fears we have of sharing our faith? The Apostle Paul offers a response in 2 Timothy 1:7 as he encourages his young friend, "For God did not give us a spirit of fearfulness, but one of power, love, and sound judgment."

Look back at the four major fears reported as reasons for not sharing our faith. One common factor in these fears is focused on the individual sharing his or her faith and not on the work of the Holy Spirit.

- We are afraid of being rejected yet Jesus was rejected, abused, and crucified. Have someone read Isaiah 53:3.
- We are afraid of not knowing enough even though the Lord has promised His Spirit to dwell within us and to give us the words to say. Have someone read Luke 21:13–15 and John 16:13.

- We are afraid of offending someone even though we have been commissioned. We have been given a job to do. Have someone read Matthew 28:18–20.
- We are afraid of being ridiculed or persecuted. Have someone read Matthew 10:38–39.

Over and over again the problem is that our focus is on what we can, cannot, will, or will not do when the focus should be on God and His ability. His grace and His Spirit work in us, through us, and in the person we witness to. It is not through our words that someone will be saved. Our failure to speak is disobedience to what we have been called to do as Christians.

### **We Are Saved**

Have individuals in the group share the names of people in their lives they fear are not saved. This could be a family member, neighbor, co-worker, or person they encounter in their weekly routine. Create a list and make copies for everyone in the group. Ask everyone in the group to pray for each person on the list at least once a week.

After reviewing the list of reasons the people in the group gave for not sharing their faith, pray for God to give everyone the courage to overcome their fears and to trust Him to provide the opportunity and the words to share.

LifeWay reports that thousands of churches have successfully used *Share Jesus Without Fear* to teach believers to go through a witnessing conversation in everyday discussions with people they know or meet. Discuss with the group and the church ministers about doing the Bible study *Share Jesus Without Fear*. In the student workbook, Fay has listed 36 responses to objections individuals give when hearing the gospel. Even if your group is not able to complete the Bible study at this time, adults are encouraged to obtain a copy of the student workbook to review the objections and responses. Adults can even choose to work through the study on their own.

### **LESSON BY**

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# Your Story

## **BIBLE VERSE**

“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15, NIV).

## **LEADER PREPARATION**

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Apostle Peter is one of the most well known disciples. Thanks to Scripture we know much about him: He was the brother of Andrew, a fisherman in business with James and John, the leader and spokesman for the 12 disciples, and by far the most impulsive in the group. Peter’s life was full of emotion, questions, boldness, and even doubt. While some criticize Peter for taking his eyes off Jesus and sinking in the water, others applaud him for having the courage to get out of the boat.

Christians often find themselves relating to Peter either through his passion for following Christ or through his denial of knowing the Lord. In examining Peter’s life, we are able to see how Jesus takes brokenness and makes something whole and holy from it. Peter went from being a swearing fisherman to an unwavering preacher after his encounter with Jesus. Peter’s life and name are forever changed because of the Lord.

While Paul served as the apostle to the Gentiles, Peter became the apostle to the Jews. The book of 1 Peter was addressed to the churches in Asia Minor experiencing persecution. Having walked with his Savior for three years, Peter shared firsthand knowledge of the sufferings of Christ. Reminded of Christ’s words that there would be persecution and suffering, Peter encouraged the church to persevere and hold onto faith.

Although today’s lesson focuses on testimonies, 1 Peter 3:15, makes no reference to the specific word *testimony*. Rather Peter encourages readers to, “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” To look at it from today’s perspective, be ready to answer those who ask: “Why are you always smiling?” “Why are you not furious about not getting the promotion?” “Aren’t you going to get back at her for what she said to you?” “How do you handle everything you have going on?”

The verse in Peter goes on to add, “But do this with gentleness and respect.” Perhaps time and experience taught the rugged fisherman that being assertive does not always cause others to hear what you have to say.

To draw the connection between Peter's instruction and giving a testimony, review the definition Webster's provides for the word *testimony*: "A firsthand authentication of a fact : **evidence**; an outward sign; a solemn declaration usually made orally by a witness under oath in response to interrogation by a lawyer or authorized public official; an open acknowledgment; a public profession of religious experience."

When we share our testimonies, we are giving reason as to why we are different from those who do not believe in Jesus. We are also sharing firsthand knowledge of where our strength and courage comes from in difficult times. As we share the hope we have, we acknowledge the source of all hope, Jesus Christ. Then by telling our story with gentleness and respect, we pray those listening will want to know more about the One who gave us our testimonies.

## TEACHING PLAN

### The Main Character

Have someone read 1 Peter 3:15. Share information from the background on Peter's life and compare his life to the lives of the Christians he was writing to.

Ask the individuals in the group what makes them different in how they dress, talk, act, and react from their co-workers, neighbors, and others they know. Prompt discussion with the following questions:

- How do you dress compared to how co-workers or others your age dress?
- How does your language differ from non-Christians around you?
- Are the topics you discuss different from non-Christians around you?
- How do you react to bad news?
- When something makes you angry, how do you react?
- How do you handle stress?
- What do you do for entertainment and how is it different from what those you know or work with do for entertainment?

Whether we realize it or not, someone is often watching us to see how we act and react. It might be family members, friends, neighbors, co-workers, or even a delivery person. Are your actions and reactions going to cause someone to ask you to give the reason you are different?

Provide class members with paper and pencil and instruct them to spend the next five to 10 minutes writing their testimonies of how they became Christians. However, rather than write this in the first person, have them write them as stories from the third person perspective with themselves as the main characters.

Once they have finished writing, have them get in groups of two to four people and read their stories to others in the group.

As a large group talk about how reading our testimonies as stories is different from simply telling it from the first person. Was it harder or easier? Would it become easier with more practice?

Ask the group if they have ever shared their Christian testimony with another individual. Have them share as much of the details as they are willing.

### **The Storyline**

When a person becomes a Christian, the journey of faith begins. A testimony of salvation is created, but the story does not end there. As we continue to walk through life and walk with Jesus, we encounter Him in new and different ways.

With paper and writing utensil in hand, have each person write a second story. This time each person should tell of something God has done or is currently doing in his or her life. As with the previous story, it should be written in third person. Encourage individuals to be as specific as possible and detail situations, conversations, prayers, and truths which revealed God working in their lives, helping them, and guiding them. Offer the following ideas to help individuals think of something to share:

- When God healed them, a family member or loved one
- How God helped them deal with a painful situation
- How God helped them deal with someone who hurt them or a loved one
- How God provided financial blessings in a time of need
- How God protected them, a family or a loved one from harm
- God's help in a difficult situation at work, within the family, with a friend or neighbor

Once they have completed their stories, have them get in groups of two to four people. Have each member of the group read his story to the others.

When the groups have completed telling their stories discuss if sharing a testimony of God's work in your life is difficult or easy.

Your life is like a book with chapters of laughter and tears, joy and disappointment, hurt and healing. God is the author and while there are some pages of your book that are personal and to be shared only between you and your Savior, there are pages He longs for you to share with others. It is your life, your experiences, your story, and your reasons for having hope that make Jesus real to the people around you.

**Credit the Author**

Close the time together by praying and asking God to provide each person with the opportunity to share his or her story (testimony) during the next week. Ask Him to give each person the discernment to know when He is presenting the situation to share. Pray for everyone to have the courage to share their story and to give their reason for hope with gentleness and respect. When the group meets again have individuals share any opportunities they had in the past week to tell their story.

**LESSON BY**

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