

Tell Me the Story!

[All references are ESV]

(Please do NOT use the “if time permits” sections when your study session time is limited. These sections could possibly be done by the participant at another time.)

Share your favorite childhood story with a partner or your small group. Why was it your favorite? How did the story make you feel? **Answers will vary, but encourage everyone to share. Make it clear that everything confided within the group stays within the group at all times.**

During this study of God’s Word, we will explore the true, biblical accounts of salvation in Jesus Christ alone, or in other words, His Story. We will also look at the apostle Paul’s life story and how the Savior Jesus radically changed the direction of Paul’s life journey. Finally, this study ends with a look at your personal faith story and how it connects with His story.

Opening Prayer: Dear heavenly Father, we confess that we sin against You daily and deserve Your wrath and punishment for our disobedience. However, we rejoice that You sent Jesus to be our Savior from sin by His perfect life, suffering, and death in our stead. We thank You that our Life-giving Lord rose from the dead, so that we, too, might rise again to life eternal. Please send Your Holy Spirit to be with us as we study Your life-changing Word. Help us to glorify Your name in our daily lives. In the name and for the sake of Jesus, we pray, Amen.

H+S Story

“I love to tell the story ‘twill be my theme in glory, to tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love” are words from the refrain of a much-loved hymn, “I Love to Tell the Story.” If you were asked to tell the “old, old story” of Jesus today, what highlights of His Story would you share? See the following Scripture passages for examples of telling Jesus’ Story. Identify the proclaimer and the highlights of their proclamation.

Acts 2:22–36 Peter. Jesus was crucified, killed, but God raised Him up, as David had prophesied in Psalms 16 and 110; Peter was a witness of the resurrection.

²² “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know— ²³ this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. ²⁴ God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. ²⁵ For David says concerning him, “I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; ²⁶ therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. ²⁷ For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. ²⁸ You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence.’ ²⁹ “Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, ³¹ he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. ³³ Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. ³⁴ For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand,³⁵ until I make your enemies your footstool.” ³⁶ Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”

Philippians 2:5–11 Paul. Jesus humbled Himself and became a man; died on the cross; exalted on high; at the name of Jesus every knee will bow in heaven and on earth.

⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Hebrews 12:1–2 Jesus is the founder and perfecter of the faith; He endured the cross; is seated at the right hand of God.

¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Read together the words of the Second Article of The Apostles' Creed and its meaning taken from *Luther's Small Catechism*:

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

What does this mean? I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord. Who has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

Read **John 1:1, 14**. Who is the Word? **Jesus Christ** ¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ¹⁴And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory,

glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

See **John 20:30–31**. How does this passage declare that the Word of God is all about Jesus and His Story? **The Word of God tells Jesus' story — sufficient for salvation.**

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book;

³¹but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

What characteristics does the Word of God — His Story — have according to **Hebrews 4:12? Living; active; sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing and discerning.**

¹²For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

The Word of God is one of the Means of Grace that the Holy Spirit uses to create and nurture faith. The Sacraments (Baptism and The Lord's Supper) are also Means of Grace. How do the Means of Grace used by the Holy Spirit change our lives? Be specific.

Answers will vary, but could include: they call to mind our sin and show us our Savior; we become new creations in Christ Jesus; we become God's own children; we are assured of our forgiveness of sins.

Read **Deuteronomy 11:18-21** and **Psalm 22:30-31**. Who needs to hear His Story?

Deuteronomy 11:18-20: ¹⁸"You shall therefore lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ¹⁹You shall teach them to your children, talking of them when you are sitting in your house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ²⁰You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, ²¹that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens are above the earth." **We need the Word; children; family.**

Psalm 22:30-31: ³⁰Posterity shall serve him; it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation; ³¹they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn, that he has done it. **Coming generations; people yet unborn.**

Write down in three sentences the story of Jesus that you would share. **Encourage all to participate; allow time to do this.**

Faith Talk: Share that story with a partner or in your small group. **Answers will vary. Encourage sharing within the group.**

Apostle Paul's Story = An Example

Read Acts 22:1–21, 1 Timothy 1:12–17 and then, 2 Corinthians 11:24–33. What characterized Saul/Paul's past? **Blasphemer, persecutor, insolent opponent to Christ; foremost of sinners.** What are the highlights and realities of Paul's story after his conversion? **Paul had the opportunity to share the Gospel of Jesus, but suffered physical hardships because of it; he was saved from death many times.**

Acts 22:1–21: "Brothers and fathers, hear the defense that I now make before you." ² And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they became even more quiet. And he said: ³ "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day. ⁴ I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering to prison both men and women, ⁵ as the high priest and the whole council of elders can bear me witness. From them I received letters to the brothers, and I journeyed toward Damascus to take those also who were there and bring them in bonds to Jerusalem to be punished. ⁶ "As I was on my way and drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone around me. ⁷ And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' ⁸ And I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.' ⁹ Now those who were with me saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. ¹⁰ And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Rise, and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all that is appointed for you to do.' ¹¹ And since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me, and came into Damascus. ¹² "And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, ¹³ came to me, and standing by me said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that very hour I received my sight and saw him. ¹⁴ And he

said, 'The God of our fathers appointed you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear a voice from his mouth; ¹⁵ for you will be a witness for him to everyone of what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.'

¹⁷ "When I had returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance ¹⁸ and saw him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.' ¹⁹ And I said, 'Lord, they themselves know that in one synagogue after another I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. ²⁰ And when the blood of Stephen your witness was being shed, I myself was standing by and approving and watching over the garments of those who killed him.' ²¹ And he said to me, 'Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

1 Timothy 1:12–17: ¹² I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, ¹³ though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, ¹⁴ and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life. ¹⁷ To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

2 Corinthians 11:24–33: ²⁴ Five times I received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. ²⁵ Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I was adrift at sea; ²⁶ on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; ²⁷ in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. ²⁸ And, apart from other things, there is the daily pressure on me of my anxiety for all the churches. ²⁹ Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to fall, and I am not indignant? ³⁰ If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. ³¹ The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forever, knows that I am not lying. ³² At Damascus, the governor under King Aretas was guarding the city of Damascus in order to seize me, ³³ but I was let

down in a basket through a window in the wall and escaped his hands.

Read **Philippians 3:13b–14; 17–21**. What was Paul's confident hope for the future? **Paul's citizenship is in heaven because of Christ. He displays his confidence by pressing on toward that heavenly goal.**

^{13b}But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁷Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. ²⁰But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Faith Talk: How does Paul's story connect with His Story? **Answers will vary. Encourage sharing within the group.**

If time permits: Read **Acts 9:1–19** for more about Saul's conversion. Scan this chapter and those following for highlights of Paul's ministry and missionary trips.

¹But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ²and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³Now as he went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven shone around him. ⁴And falling to the ground he heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" ⁵And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." ⁷The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one. ⁸Saul rose from the ground, and although his eyes were opened, he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank. ¹⁰Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." ¹¹And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is

praying, ¹²and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight." ¹³But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints at Jerusalem. ¹⁴And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on your name." ¹⁵But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. ¹⁶For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name." ¹⁷So Ananias departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit." ¹⁸And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized; ¹⁹and taking food, he was strengthened.

My Story

Read **Ephesians 2:1–3, 11–12**. What characteristics are parts of our **past**? **Dead in trespasses and sins; followed the world and the devil; lived in darkness; separated from Christ; alienated; having no hope; without God in the world.**

¹And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. ¹¹Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹²remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you

who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

What good news do we hear about our **present** in **Ephesians 2:4–10, 13** and also in the following passages? **God in mercy made us alive together with Christ; by grace saved through faith; have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

Isaiah 44:21-22

21 Remember these things, O Jacob, and Israel, for you are my servant; I formed you; you are my servant; O Israel, you will not be forgotten by me. 22 I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud and your sins like mist; return to me, for I have redeemed you. Our transgressions have been blotted out; we are redeemed.

John 3:16

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. Jesus saves us!

1 Peter 2:9–10

9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. We are God's people; we have received mercy, so that we may proclaim the Good News of salvation.

Read **Malachi 3:16–18** and **Revelation 21:22–27**. What is our hope for the **future** in these passages?

Malachi 3:16–18: 16 Then those who feared the LORD spoke with one another. The LORD paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the LORD and esteemed his name. 17 "They shall be mine, says the LORD of hosts, in the day when I make up my treasured possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. 18 Then once more you shall see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him. We are God's treasured possessions and are written in His book of life because of Jesus' redemption.

Revelation 21:22–27: 22 And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. 23 And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24 By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, 25 and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there. 26 They will bring into it the glory and the honor of

the nations. 27 But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life. A vision of heaven with the assurance that those who believe in the Lamb of God and whose names are written in the book of life will be there!

Discuss the following song verse in light of the future in Christ Jesus. **Encourage discussion.**

Some days seem long, though life is brief,
and death is waiting like a thief.
When vision fades and dreams go dry, we
will on Unseen things rely.
Our stories take up but a page, but Yours
goes on from age to age.
I AM forever WHO I AM, Above you,
beneath you, around you and within you.
Be still and know that I AM God.

*Text: Richard W. Wiegmann. Used by permission.

Read **Revelation 1:4b–8**. What assurance does this Scripture give to us?

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood 6 and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. 7 Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him, and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him. Even so. Amen. 8 "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." He is the firstborn of the dead and will reign forever; He loves us and we will rise and live with Him forever.

Faith Talk: How is your story connected to His Story? Share with a partner or in a small group. **Answers will vary. Encourage sharing within the group.**

The Lutheran Women's Missionary League (LWML) celebrates 70 years of God's grace this year 2012. God has blessed the work of dedicated women through the years as their mites have been used to support mission grants across the nation and throughout the world. The women of the LWML are truly women of the Word, who take to heart Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19a *to go...and make disciples of all nations*. Throughout 70 years, the Holy Spirit has empowered dedicated women to

accomplish faithful acts of service done to the glory of His name, and to boldly proclaim the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ. May God bless the LWML as they look toward the future, confident of His continuing grace in future years to come.

If time permits: Who has been an LWML mentor for you? What is your LWML story? How is it connected to His Story? Share with a partner or in a small group. **Answers will vary. Encourage sharing within the group.**

Faith Walk:

1. Write down your faith story in three sentences.
2. With the help of the Holy Spirit, share your faith story and how it connects to His Story.
3. Thank Jesus for giving you salvation, forgiveness of sins, and eternal life.
4. Read more about the LWML: *Women in League with the Lord* by Marlys Taeye (#20910) or *God Gave the Increase* by Marlys Taeye Moberg, Lauren Beale, and Janice Kerper Brauer (#14986). Available from the LWML Catalog or online at www.lwml.org.

Closing: Read **Psalm 100** together.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!
Serve the LORD with gladness!
Come into his presence with singing!
Know that the LORD, he is God!
It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise!
Give thanks to him; bless his name!
For the LORD is good;
his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.
Amen!

Shari Miller, wife of Rev. Larry and mother of Joshua and Johanna, is LWML Planner on the Executive Committee and the past District President of the Montana District LWML. She lives in Helena, Montana, and has written numerous articles and studies for the LWML.

*Order the hymn score for *I AM forever WHO I AM* by Kurt E. von Kampen; text by Richard W. Wiegmann (#976973) from Concordia Publishing House, www.cph.org.

Hymn Suggestions:

1. *I Love to Tell the Story*, Text – Catherine A. Hankey; Music – William G. Fischer, Public Domain.
2. *Tell Me the Story of Jesus*, Text – Fanny Crosby; Music – John R. Sweney, Public Domain.