



**THIS IS MY
STORY**

the power of
story telling

**MCG
Study Guide
Story Telling
May 2nd – May 8th**

**MISSIONAL
COMMUNITY** 



Prayer Requests:**Wednesday May 2nd – Bearing Witness****Reading** Psalm 107:1 - 3*“Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story”*

The first time the phrase “information explosion” was used was in 1961. Since that time, it has become somewhat commonplace. There is more information available than any one person could possibly absorb. On top of all this available information is the increase in the number of ways to share it.

The number of information exchange apps increases every week: Facebook, Twitter, Snap Chat, Instagram, Vine, LinkedIn, Tumblr, TapTalk, Pinterest, and the list could go on. There are so many different ways for people to get information out to others.

While this means that “fake news” can abound, it also means that “good news” can abound also! There is a tremendous opportunity for Christians to tell their stories of God’s goodness, and this is exactly what God wants us to do. We are to tell our stories of God’s goodness in our lives.

We don’t need to preach or condemn, we simply need to tell our story of God’s goodness whenever we experience it. We need to help others to realize that God has not abandoned this planet but is actively engaged in people’s lives - our lives. Even their lives if they would consider Him.

Those who have been born again have the very unique privilege of being able to see the Kingdom of God.¹ We need to share what we see with others.

One of the reasons why people are drifting towards other spiritualities is because there is a lack of interest in the church and in Christianity. People are no longer interested because they assume they've heard it all before and know what it's all about.

We have the opportunity to raise the "curiosity quotient" in society by telling our stories of God's goodness (#godsgoodness) in our lives. Let there be a "good news explosion" of stories which bear witness to God, so that people might become curious to explore His goodness for themselves!

Meditation/Application

Why not consider bearing witness to God's goodness using one of your social media accounts? Post a verse, a story about God moving in your life, or the words to a favourite hymn or worship song, or perhaps a link. Pray and ask God what you might post that would bless someone who might read it and then after you post it, ask God to use that simple communication for His Kingdom.

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- Pray for our gardeners who are starting to turn over the soil and plant seeds; pray for healthy new relationships
- Pray for wisdom as we discover new ways of telling our stories

¹ John 3:3

Thursday May 3rd – The Power of Testimony

Reading Revelation 12:7 -12

They triumphed over him... by the word of their testimony

It is one thing to say that testimonies have power and it is another to experience the power of someone's testimony. Consider the power of this story as you read it:

Michael Ramsden, a co-worker with Ravi Zacharias, shared the following true story about a minister from Iran. As the minister was driving with his wife, they stopped in a small Iranian village to purchase some water. Before entering, the minister noticed a man holding a machine gun and leaning against the wall outside the store. The minister's wife looked at the man's face and the gun, then put a Bible in her husband's hand and said, "Give that man this Bible." Her husband looked at the man—his menacing beard and his machine gun—and replied, "I don't think so," but she persisted: "I'm serious. Give it to him. Please, give him the Bible."

Trying to avoid the issue, the husband said, "Okay, I'll pray about it." He went into the shop, purchased the water, climbed back into the car, and started to drive away. His wife looked at him and said, "I guess you didn't give him the Bible, did you?" Looking straight ahead, he replied, "No, I prayed about it and it wasn't the right thing to do." She quietly said, "You should have given him the Bible," and then she bowed her head and started praying. At that point, he turned around and told his wife, "Fine! If you want me to die, I will."

When the minister returned to the store, the man with the machine gun was still standing against the wall. The minister approached him and placed the Bible in his hand. When the man opened it and saw it was a Bible, he started to cry. "I don't live here," he said. "I had to walk for three days in order to get to this village. Three days ago an angel appeared to me and told me to walk to this village and wait until someone gave me the Book of Life. Thank you for giving me this book."

The minister became a courageous witness for Christ. Eventually, along with many other co-workers in the Iranian church, he was martyred for his faith.²

Our testimonies of God have power – even the power to overcome Satan.

Meditation/Application

Think about your own testimony of God calling you to Himself. Regardless of how dramatic or dynamic, it has power to help defeat Satan. Take time to pray through your own story of being called to God. Thank God for His grace in your life.

Reflecting on the reading:

What do we learn about Satan from this passage?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- Pray for our people to be living into their communities during the summer months when the weather brings others outside more often
- Pray for new MCG groups to spawn & grow

² Michael Ramsden, "An Uncompromising Faith Lived Out with Grace," Just Thinking (1-26-09)

Friday May 4th – The Persuasiveness of Testimony

Reading John 4:39 – 42

“Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony...”

We live at a time where personal testimonies are as persuasive as they have ever been. Eyewitness testimony is critically important to the justice system. Indeed, it is necessary in all criminal trials to reconstruct facts from past events, and eyewitnesses are commonly very important to this effort.

Psychologists use a term called “social proof”. “Social proof is a psychological phenomenon where people reference the behaviour of others to guide their own behaviour.”³ This is why advertisers use others to endorse their product and testify to its benefits. This is why McDonald’s put up a sign in 1958 saying, “over 100 million hamburgers sold.” We think to ourselves 100 million people can’t all be wrong.

According to *Marketing Land*, “Ninety percent of customers purchases are influenced by online reviews.”⁴ Marketers know that personal testimonies and stories persuade people to invest time, energy and money into finding out for themselves if the claims are true.

So too with our stories and testimonies of God. Over time they encourage people to investigate God for themselves and the promise of Scripture is “You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”⁵

The power of your testimony is not its converting force, but its persuasive force. A person may not become a Christian because of what you say, but what you say may persuade them to investigate. Over time we may find, just as the woman as the well did, that people are saying

³ <https://www.nngroup.com/articles/social-proof-ux/>

⁴ <https://www.ams-agency.com/the-right-testimonials-deliver/>

⁵ Jeremiah 29:13

“We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world.”⁶⁶

The key to effective, persuasive testimonies is integrity between the message and the messenger. If we claim a life changed by Jesus the way we live should verify that change. How we live should match with what we say, so an effective testimony is not only our words but our lives. When these align, our testimony can have incredible influence in encouraging others to seek God for themselves.

Meditation/Application

Ask God to reveal to you where He has been at work in you and your life. Consider how you might share what God is doing. Come prepared to tell your testimony of God working at your MCG gathering.

Reflecting on the reading:

From today’s reading describe the process of how the Samaritans became believers. What might this process look like in our day and context?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- Have you considered how your story may impact another?
- Pray for those who are yet to come to faith in your life

⁶⁶ John 4:42

Saturday May 5th – The Simplicity of Testimony

Reading 1 Corinthians 2:1 – 5

"I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God."

We often have the misguided notion that a testimony must be dramatic, dynamic or sensational. Most of us feel that our stories aren't that powerful or effective, and yet, much of the time, the testimonies that touch us most deeply are the ones to which we relate most closely. Sure, the testimonies of pimps coming to Christ or drug addicts getting cleaned up inspire us, but not many of us can relate.

Often the power of an effective testimony is its clarity and simplicity.

In the year he was elected president, Jimmy Carter was one of three men invited to speak to the 17,000 delegates at the Southern Baptist Convention. Each had a five-minute time limit.

The first of the three presenters was the eloquent evangelist, Billy Graham. The speaker following Graham was a truck driver. The man was not well educated, and seated beside the next U.S. president, the truck driver shared that he had never given a speech in his life. Nervously he confessed, "I don't think I can live through it. I just can't do it."

After Billy Graham gave his powerful talk, the truck driver rose to speak and stood silently before the audience. Taking a glass of water handed to him, he mumbled into the microphone.

"I was always drunk, and didn't have any friends. The only people I knew were men like me who hung around the bars in the town where I lived." The truck driver went on to describe how someone told him about Christ. Once becoming a Christian, he wanted to tell others about the Lord. Spending time in Bible study and with other Christian men prepared him for witnessing. Since he felt comfortable in barrooms, he decided to talk to people there. The bartender wasn't sympathetic, telling the new convert he was bad for business and a nuisance.

Not discouraged, the truck driver kept on with his mission, and in time the people at the bar began asking questions. He said, "At first they treated me like a joke, but I kept up with the questions and when I couldn't answer one, I went and got the answer and came back with it. Fourteen of my friends became Christians."

Carter writes, "The truck driver's speech, of course, was the highlight of the convention. I don't believe anyone who was there will ever forget that five-minute fumbling statement—or remember what I or even Billy Graham had to say."

The power of our testimony really does rely upon the Spirit of God. When we speak simply God works powerfully. So go ahead tell your simple story of God's goodness the next time you have an opportunity and see what God does.

Meditation/Application

Take time to ask God for an opportunity to share a testimony about Him with someone this week. Remember, a testimony doesn't have to tell the *whole story* of God at work in your life but *a story* of God at work in your life.

Reflecting on the reading:

How did Paul say he came to the Corinthians when he shared his testimony about God? Does this surprise you? Why do you think he felt this way?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- Pray for those whose story includes abuse, neglect, trauma & live in significant hurt, to know and live in Christ's love & forgiveness

Sunday May 6th –

Reading

Sermon Notes:

Meditation/Application

As you think about today's sermon what is one action point that you are taking away?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- Pray for the persecuted church and consider how you might hear about their stories
www.cbm.org
www.vomcanada.com
www.persecuted.org

Monday May 7th – Declaring Praises

Reading 1 Peter 2:9 – 10

“that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

This verse helps us to understand that God designed the church to declare His praise.

The context which follows helps us to understand that this “declaring praise” is not primarily intended to take place to and for the Christian community. It takes place among “the pagans” (2:11, 12) among governmental structures (2:13-17). Believing slaves are to do it among unbelieving masters (2:18-21) believing wives among unbelieving husbands (3:1-6) and in the same way, believing husbands among unbelieving wives (3:7).

Furthermore, the term translated “declare” carries with it the wider sense of “publishing abroad.” It implies that the declaring is taking place from those who know to those who don’t; a revealing of something that has previously been concealed. In other words, declaring praise, for which the church has been called, should also happen among those to whom God’s majesty has not yet been revealed. When we tell others about God and His splendour, we are in fact worshipping.

Consider a couple who begin to date. Over time their feelings for each other increase until one day they say to each other, “I love you.” Now imagine that one day the man says to the woman, “When will you tell your family and friends that we are in love?” She replies, “Isn’t it enough that I have told you privately? Why do we need to broadcast it all over the place?”

You can imagine that the man would begin to question the woman’s love for him. He might imagine that she is ashamed of him or that she is embarrassed to be associated with him. No doubt he would be questioning what type of love is embarrassed to be associated with the object of their love.

So too is the nature of our love with God. Yes, it is good that we tell Him that we love Him. I'm sure that He delights in our praise as together, with other believers, we make our praise of Him known, but after a while I wonder if God doesn't think, "When will you tell your friends and family that you love me? Why don't you tell them what you think of me, like you do when we're alone?"

Our praise of God is not meant to be solely a private affair. We are to publish it and make it known to others who have not yet met Him.

Meditation/Application

Are there times when you feel awkward, afraid or embarrassed to talk about God to others? Take time to talk to God about this. Ask Him to disciple you to become less intimidated. Consider coming prepared to share something in the safe(r) context of your MCG.

Reflecting on the reading:

How has God moved you out of darkness and into light?

In what ways has God made us into His people?

Prayer Points:

As you pray for your church family, community, MCG and yourself, please remember these prayer requests:

- Give thanks for His character in you
- Pray for those at NBBC dealing with cancer & other health concerns (see back of bulletin)

Tuesday May 8th – Telling About God

Reading 1 Chronicles 16:8 – 11

“...make known among the nations what he has done.”

I recognize that speaking to other people can be intimidating. It may not feel natural and yet we can't escape our responsibility. How do we tell others what feels so awkward to talk about?

Perhaps we put too much pressure on ourselves because of some grand perception of what witnessing is “supposed” to be

A friend of mine was caught in an elevator during a power failure, tells Luci Swindoll. At first, there was momentary panic as all seven strangers talked at once. Then my friend remembered the tiny flashlight he had in his pocket. When he turned it on, the fear dissipated. During the 45 minutes they were stuck together they told jokes, laughed, and even sang. Ephesians 5:8 says we are that flashlight. Just as the flashlight draws power from its batteries, we draw power from Jesus. As light, we dissipate fear, bring relief, and lift spirits. We don't even have to be big to be effective. We just have to be "on."⁷

Much like any (and every) skill, we start by fumbling and failing. We make attempts and learn from our mistakes, but we start those attempts where it is safe to fail. This is why we tell the stories of God in our gatherings on Sunday and in our MCGs. It is as we practise telling stories of God at work, that we soon discover that telling those stories becomes easier and feels more natural.

Over time we may just find ourselves getting so caught up in telling others about what God is doing that we forget to filter the stories to only people we consider to be “safe”. Amazing things will happen - not only to others but also to yourself - when you find yourself caught up in your stories of God

⁷ Luci Swindoll, "Heart to Heart," *Today's Christian Woman*.

Martin Buber, the Jewish philosopher, recalls: “My grandfather was lame. Once they asked him to tell a story about his teacher, and he related how his master used to hop and dance while he prayed. My grandfather rose as he spoke and was so swept away by his story that he himself began to hop and dance to show how the master had done. From that hour he was cured of his lameness.”

When we tell the stories of God, and find ourselves caught up in the telling, we become changed, even if those with whom we speak are not.

Preparing for your MCG

As you come for you MCG be prepared to share:

- **POTLUCK:** Be mindful about a story you might share regarding the importance of MCG regular group meeting together (ie what it means to you, or how the group has seen God work in or through them)
- **STUDY:** Share from your time of Meditation/Application from each day’s study. What from this study made an impression on you or what confused you?
- **PRAYER WALK/ACTIVITY:** be creative and intentional as you pray/work together.



CALENDAR, PEOPLE and DETAILS HERE:

<https://nbbc.churchcenter.com/groups>

Missional Community Group (MCG) Covenant

We desire to grow as followers of Jesus who represent Him and His Kingdom well in all of our life. We recognize that God's plan is for us to grow in and through relationships with other like-minded disciples. As those who identify as neighbourhood missionaries we enter into this covenant so that we might be transformed by God's grace and that together we might be transforming agents in our neighbourhood.

To this end, this year, we therefore covenant to:

- Meet regularly for weekly encouragement, accountability, and fellowship in our Missional Community Group and corporately with all of NBBC.
- Seek to grow in likeness to Jesus by engaging in NBBC MCG's shared practices.
- Nurture loving relationships within our Missional Community, accepting others as Christ has accepted us.
- Faithfully steward the resources that God has given us: time, abilities, resources and energy.
- Together discern where God is at work and join Him in His mission to bring the Kingdom of God to our neighbourhood.

In all that we covenant, we recognize that we are dependant upon the grace of God to enable us and so we joyfully enter this covenant in hope of what He might do in and through us.

Missional Community Group Shared Practices

1. Daily engage in reading Scripture and pray for God to bless NBBC in its missional calling.
2. Weekly purposely and intentionally bless another person.
3. Monthly practise table fellowship with someone in your Missional Community.
4. Respond to the Spirit's prompting as you sense Him leading and directing.
5. Share with others the stories of what God is doing in your life as opportunities arise.