



**MAIN POINT:** Share your stories because stories remind us we're not alone.

**MAIN SCRIPTURES:** Luke 24:36-40 & Acts 28:1-10

**GOSPEL MOMENT:** Jesus' story was painful. It left Him with scars. But Jesus didn't hide those scars. Instead, He shared them and His story freely.

## THE WHAT?

### **ME: DISCUSSION: "Tell a story about a crazy injury you've had."**

- Turn to the person next to you and tell them about a crazy injury you've had. If you've got a scar (and it's in an appropriate place), show it off.
- Once you've heard your neighbor's story, say, "Thanks for sharing." Okay, go!
- *Wrap it up by asking everyone to say together, "Thanks for sharing!" Then share your own story.*

### **WE: WE LOVE STORIES**

- We love to read, watch, and listen to stories. We love the excitement of not knowing what will happen next. We love stories with twists and turns, highs and lows, and happy endings.
- We love to tell stories, too. Most of the time, we probably like to tell stories about the good times in our lives. But sometimes we like telling stories about our screw-ups and scars, too. Maybe that's because we lived to tell the tale . . . and maybe even learned a thing or two.

### **ACTIVITY: Story Show and Tell**

- *A few days before you teach this message, communicate with your students. Ask them to bring something to your program this week that represents their favorite story.*
- Earlier this week, we asked you to bring with you something that represents your favorite story. It could be a book, a movie, a TV show — whatever it is, we want to hear about it. Partner up with a few people sitting near you and tell each other why it's your favorite story.
- *After a few minutes, take control of the conversation again.*
- Okay, let's hear from a few people. What's your favorite story and why?
- *Let a few students talk about their favorite stories and show their items, if they have them.*

Transition:

## SO WHAT?

### **GOD: MAIN SCRIPTURE #1: Luke 24:36-40**

- In a minute, we're going to read a story about a guy named Paul, who went on an adventure and had some pretty terrible things happen to him. But before we get there, we need to talk about the man who inspired Paul's journey, and that's Jesus.

- You see, today we're going to talk about our stories and why it's important that we share them. But like you might have guessed from that opening question, we're not going to talk about the fun, happy, everything-is-wonderful kind of stories. We're going to talk about the kind of stories we hate to tell, because they've left us with scars.
- **GOSPEL MOMENT:** In the book of Luke, we find a story that shows us Jesus knows exactly what that's like. In this story, Jesus has not only died, but has come back from the dead! Sure, that story has a happy ending, but that doesn't mean Jesus' pain, and suffering, and torture were any less real or any less painful. Check out what happened after Jesus rose from the dead. *Read Luke 24:36-40.*
- Jesus' story had been painful, both emotionally and physically. It left Him with scars. But here's what's interesting. Jesus didn't hide those scars. Instead, He showed them freely to His friends to let them know that even our most painful stories can have new life when we share them.

### JESUS' EARLY FOLLOWERS SHARED THEIR STORIES

- Jesus wasn't shy about sharing the painful parts of His story. I don't know about you, but when I hear Jesus' story of death and resurrection, I don't think about His scars as a symbol of failure, and His early followers didn't either. In fact, His scars were a symbol of victory. And when I'm hurting, or afraid, or feeling defeated, Jesus' story is a reminder that I'm not the only one who has been hurt. Jesus has, too. And He's with me through it all.
- That attitude characterized the early church. When Jesus left earth, His earliest followers continued to share not only Jesus' story, but their own as well. Even the messy parts.
- They understood that, when we're honest about our own stories of hurt, loss, failure, or fear, we make it easier for others to be brave about owning and sharing their own stories. Because owning and sharing our stories are often the first step toward healing. **They shared their stories because hearing others' stories (especially the painful ones) remind us we're not alone.**

### MAIN SCRIPTURE #2: Acts 28:1-10

- Paul was one of those early followers of Jesus. He didn't always have an easy story. After He began to follow Jesus and share His story, Paul was beaten, arrested, imprisoned, and kicked out of cities because he was preaching too much. Then while he was sailing to a new city on one of his journeys, his ship wrecks in a storm and he is stranded on an island. Pretty terrible, right? And look what happens next. *Read Acts 28:1-10*
- Imagine living this story. All you're trying to do is tell people about Jesus, but terrible things keep happening to you. You think a shipwreck is the worst of it, but then you get bit by a snake!
- Some good came of this, though. There was a man nearby who needed help. And Paul, because of his shipwreck, had the opportunity to help.
- If I were Paul, I'm not sure I would have wanted to include all of those details of pain, and failure, and trouble. But Paul did. And I think he did for this reason: he understood that God is working in even our most painful stories. And when we share those stories, they are often a reminder to someone else who's hurting that they're not alone.



## NOW WHAT?

### YOU: ACTIVITY: If You Really Knew Me

- This is so important because, sometimes, you're going to feel like you're the only one dealing with the hurt, or the pain, or the experiences you're dealing with. When we feel like we're the only ones with a painful story, we may start to feel alone or ashamed. And when we feel alone or ashamed, we want to keep those painful stories a secret.
- I want to try something. Everyone, come stand with me up front. Let's make a circle.
- I'm going to list a few experiences or situations that may or may not be part of your story. If they are part of your story, just take a step forward.
- *To begin, start with a few fun or simple experiences to loosen them up, like . . .*
  - You have a pet.
  - You once had an imaginary friend.
  - You love the *[choose your favorite sports team]*.
- *Then transition gradually to more painful experiences, like . . .*
  - Your parents aren't together anymore.
  - You've been bullied.
  - Your family has ever needed financial help.
  - You've felt discriminated against because of your gender, race, sexuality, etc.
  - Someone you love is very sick.
  - You sometimes wonder if this whole Jesus thing is even real.
  - *NOTE: When choosing which experiences you'll list, avoid any experiences that might single out only one teenager in your ministry.*
- *For each experience, leave enough time and space for students to step forward, look around, and process for a few seconds. Then ask them to step back in line before you list the next experience. It would be helpful to play some instrumental music during this activity.*
- We've all been through some difficult moments. We all have scars. More than we've even acknowledged here today. But my hope for you is this: that you'll leave today knowing that you're not alone and that your story is worth sharing, because it may just help someone else know that they're not alone either.

### WE: WE CAN SHARE OUR STORIES

- It's difficult to reveal and talk about the scars we've received.
- But just like Paul, and even Jesus, your scars are part of a much bigger story.
- Just like in the movies, and books, and TV shows you talked about a few minutes ago, you can't have a great story or a great ending to that story without some difficulty.
- In the same way you might share your favorite book with someone else, we need you to share your stories — even the painful ones.
- **Share your stories because stories remind us we're not alone.**

**PRAY:** God, thank you for sharing your life with us and working in our lives. Empower us to share our stories of what You have done in our lives and for others with others. Amen.