

HOPE

LIVING WITH CONFIDENT EXPECTATION

WEEK 5:

OUR STORIES OF HOPE

SERIES DESCRIPTION:

We are people of hope! As Christians we know Jesus walks with us through our joys and sorrows, our times of contentment and our times of pain. Easter is here—and with it the new life we find in Jesus!

BIG IDEA:

Through Jesus we have hope that our stories are still being written, and this hope compels us to share our story with others.



MAIN SCRIPTURE: JOHN 4:4-10, 39-42, CEB

"Jesus had to go through Samaria. He came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, which was near the land Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there. Jesus was tired from his journey, so he sat down at the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to the well to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me some water to drink." His disciples had gone into the city to buy him some food. The Samaritan woman asked, "Why do you, a Jewish man, ask for something to drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" (Jews and Samaritans didn't associate with each other.) Jesus responded, "If you recognized God's gift and who is saying to you, 'Give me some water to drink,' you would be asking him and he would give you living water."

... Many Samaritans in that city believed in Jesus because of the woman's word when she testified, "He told me everything I've ever done." So when the Samaritans came to Jesus, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days. Many more believed because of his word, and they said to the woman, "We no longer believe because of what you said, for we have heard for ourselves and know that this one is truly the savior of the world."



SECONDARY SCRIPTURE: LUKE 5:18-26, CEB

"Some men were bringing a man who was paralyzed, lying on a cot. They wanted to carry him in and place him before Jesus, but they couldn't reach him because of the crowd. So they took him up on the roof and lowered him—cot and all—through the roof tiles into the crowded room in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." The legal experts and Pharisees began to mutter among themselves, "Who is this who insults God? Only God can forgive sins!" Jesus recognized what they were discussing and responded, "Why do you fill your minds with these questions? Which is easier—to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? But so that you will know that the Human One has authority on the earth to forgive sins" —Jesus now spoke to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, get up, take your cot, and go home." Right away, the man stood before them, picked up his cot, and went home, praising God. All the people were beside themselves with wonder. Filled with awe, they glorified God, saying, "We've seen unimaginable things today."



ACTIVITY: SILLY STORIES (This activity is a classic Mad Lib.)

As the leader, have students give you words to fill in the blanks to complete this Silly Story below. Don't reveal the story or tell them how the words will be used until the very end! Then, read the silly story you created all together!

As a review, here are the types of words that will be used, and how they are used:

- **Adjective:** a word used to describe a person place or thing, such as: *lumpy, soft, loud, quiet*
- **Adverb:** tells how something is done and often ends in "-ly," such as: *slowly, quietly, guiltily, grumpily*
- **Noun:** a person, place, or thing, such as: *cat, suitcase, chair, hairbrush, backpack, church*. It can also be plural: *cats, suitcases, hairbrushes, backpacks, churches*
- **Verb:** an action or doing word, such as: *swim, climb, push, eat*. It can also be past tense: *swam, climbed, pushed, ate*.
- **Place:** country, city, state, room, such as: *Italy, Kansas City, Missouri, kitchen*
- **Specific categories of words that will be used:** *vehicle, number*

OUR SILLY STORY (Adapted from madtakes.com)

Remember: keep this story a secret until you read it all together with the words filled in. That's what makes it silly!

Ask students for words in the order below, and write them in as you go: verb, adjective, plural noun, vehicle, noun...etc.

God told Noah that it was going to _____ **(verb)** for a _____ **(adjective)** time. God gave Noah _____ **(plural noun)** on what to do: "Make a _____ **(vehicle)**. It should be made out of gopher _____ **(noun)** and should be _____ **(number)** _____ **(plural noun)** long, and 75 _____ **(plural noun)** wide. Take with you _____ **(number)** of every _____ **(adjective)** creature: One _____ **(adjective)**, and one female."

So, Noah gathered his _____ **(noun)** together, and they _____ **(verb ending in "-ed")** the ark. Noah's friends _____ **(verb ending in "-ed")** him as he worked, but Noah didn't pay attention to them. Finally, after 120 _____ **(measurement of time)**, the ark was _____ **(verb ending in "-ed")**. They gathered all the creatures, and as the last one boarded, it began to _____ **(same verb as in the first blank)**. For 40 _____ **(plural noun)** and 40 _____ **(plural noun)**, it went on. The Earth became covered with _____ **(type of liquid)**. After a year and a day, they found _____ **(noun)** and everyone else was _____ **(adjective)**. And as a sign that God would never _____ **(verb)** the earth again, God put a/an _____ **(noun)** in the _____ **(place)** as a symbol of love.

Debrief of Activity: While this may be a funny take on a popular Bible story from the Old Testament (Noah's Ark), it is a good reminder that when we allow God to write our stories, they will end in hope, just like the story of Noah ended in hope. The sign of a rainbow in the sky in Noah's story was a symbol of the promise that God would take care of him.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- *Have you ever been left on a "cliff hanger" in the middle of an exciting book, movie or television show?*
- *Who is a good storyteller in your life? What makes this person such a good storyteller?*
- *Do you feel like you are currently in the beginning or the middle of your story?*
- *How did you first encounter Jesus? Did someone share their story with you? Did someone share the story of Jesus with you?*
- *Read together our Main Scripture from **John 4:4-10, 39-42**. What did Jesus offer to the Samaritan woman at the well? What happened when she shared her story of hope with her village?*
- *Read together our Secondary Scripture from **Luke 5:18-26**. Do you think the paralyzed man in the story had much hope before he met Jesus? Why or why not?*
- *In this story from Luke, we often call the men who carried their friend on the cot to Jesus "stretcher-bearers." Who are the "stretcher-bearers" in your life that carry you when you need hope?*
- *Of the two stories, which main character do you relate to more: the Samaritan woman or the paralyzed man? How did each of their stories change after they encountered Jesus?*
- *How does it feel knowing that your story is not over and is still being written?*



CHALLENGE:

PART 1:

This week take some time to write out your own story of hope. While this may sound hard, just remember that all stories have a beginning, a middle and an end. Use these prompts as a guide:

The Beginning:

- How did your story start?
- Where were you living at the time?
- Whose story first introduced you to Jesus?

The Middle:

- What happened in your story?
- Who were the people involved?
- What was the "cliff-hanger" moment?
- How did Jesus show up in the middle of your story?

Your story is still being written:

- What has Jesus done for you in the past?
- Where have you found hope in your story so far?
- What can you count on Jesus for in the future?
- Who do you want to hear your story?

PART 2:

Now, take your Challenge a step further! We weren't meant to keep our stories to ourselves. Our stories of hope were meant to be shared with others! Just like when you heard how much Jesus meant in someone else's story and were changed, your story can do the same. So, who will you share your story with? Who is one person you could text right now and say: "I have an important story to share with you. Do you wanna hear it sometime?" Or go big and post it on social media! If you do share your story online, be sure to use the hashtags **#HopeStories** and **#ResurrectionHope**. We can't wait to see how Jesus changed your story and brought you hope!



LEADER TIP:

Sharing our stories can be a powerful—but scary—experience, especially for teenagers in a world where Christians are increasingly in the minority. It takes courage to be vulnerable and to trust others with our stories. If possible, model courage, vulnerability and trust for your group and provide them with an example of what sharing a story looks like: tell about a time in your own life when Jesus changed your story, met you where you were, and brought hope into your life. What is most personal is most universal. Our personal stories of Jesus' impact on us will speak the loudest to others.