



MORE TO LIFE

ENGAGING THROUGH STORY

DENNIS PETHERS

 LifeWay
Biblical Solutions for Life

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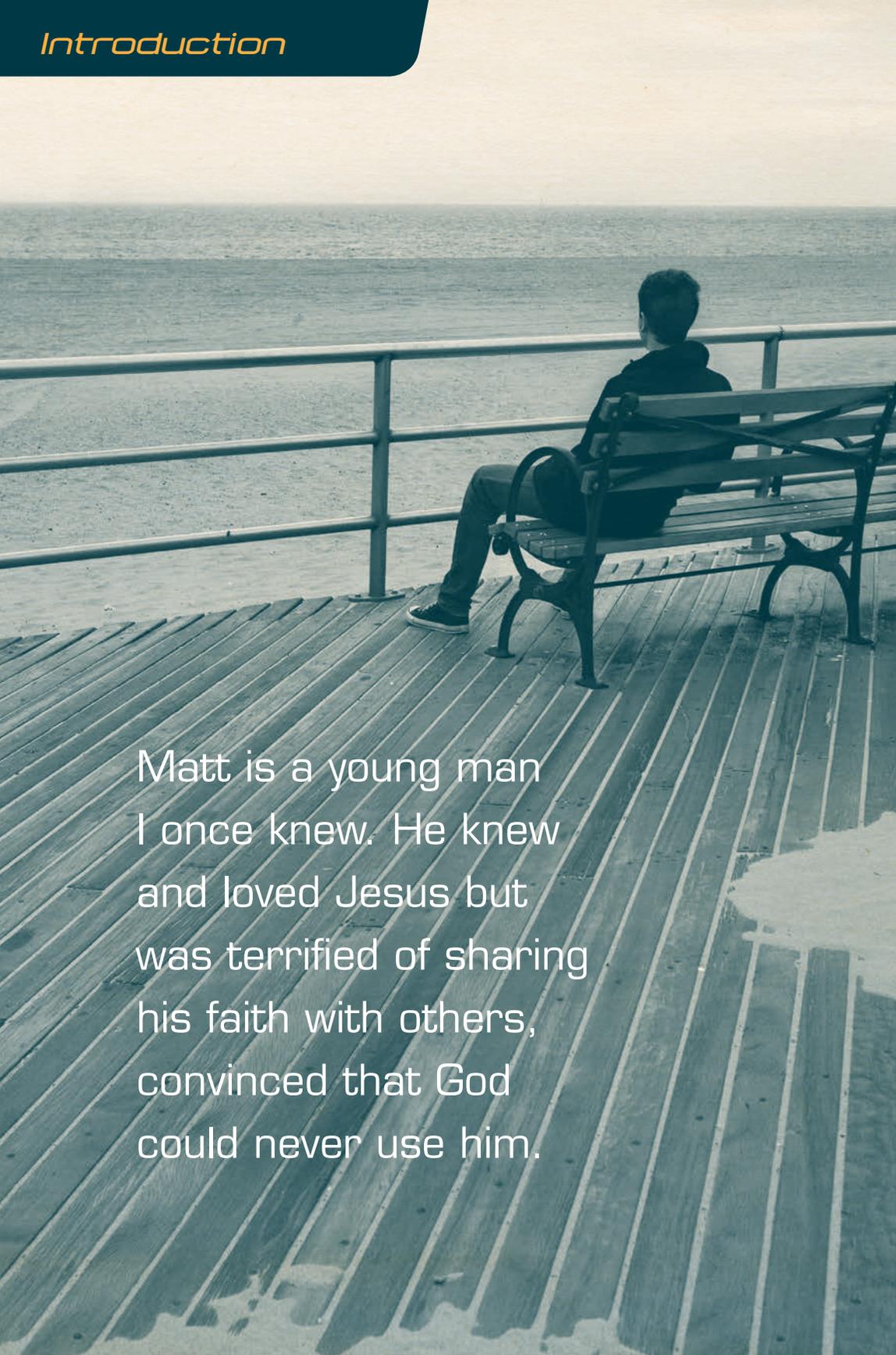
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A young man is sitting on a wooden bench on a pier, looking out at the ocean. The scene is captured in a monochromatic, teal-tinted style. The man is seen from behind, sitting on a dark wooden bench with ornate metal legs. He is wearing a dark jacket and dark pants. The pier is made of wooden planks and has a metal railing. The ocean stretches to the horizon under a pale sky. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Matt is a young man I once knew. He knew and loved Jesus but was terrified of sharing his faith with others, convinced that God could never use him.

I can still see the joy on Matt's face as he rushed toward me at a coffee bar calling out aloud, wearing a grin that seemed to consume his entire face. "I did it! I did it," he called at the top of his voice. "I told him about how God changed my life, and he wanted God to change his. I can't believe it. It's brilliant!"

Because of Matt's witness a young man gave his life to Christ. He was utterly transformed—and so was Matt. The young man was transformed into a believer, and Matt was transformed into a believer who believed that God could use him to win a lost person. He was never the same again!

Wouldn't it be great if God could do that in your life? He can!

God's Heart

Participating in *More to Life: Engaging Through Story* will help you to see and believe that God can use you. It begins by a key emphasis that evangelism—telling others the good news—is not something that we do as a chore or to recruit more people to our church. It is essentially something that we do because it is an expression of the heart of God Himself. He loves the lost and sent Jesus to seek and to save them. As we open our hearts to Him, we begin to see lost people as He sees them.

My Part

As we begin to discover and feel God's heart, then we can each play our part. You will discover that this does not require that you become a great preacher or brilliant theologian. Your part is probably best summed up as sharing what you are experiencing of God with people who don't know Him.

Whoever you are and whatever you are like, God can and will use you to reach out to others and help them to discover the good news. This is what Matt experienced, and you can too!

Video sessions are available for download at www.lifeway.com/downloads.

The image shows the lower legs and feet of two people walking on a light-colored tiled floor. The lighting is dramatic, coming from the side, which casts long, dark shadows of the legs and feet onto the floor. The overall color palette is a mix of light and dark tones, with the floor appearing bright and the shadows appearing deep black or dark blue.

SESSION ONE

Causing Heaven to Rejoice

“I tell you, in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous people who don’t need repentance.”

LUKE 15:7

Joy is perhaps the emotion that we crave most and experience least, often momentary and yet always memorable. In Luke 15, Jesus speaks to a crowd, made up of those who thought they were righteous and those who were known as sinners, to explain an amazing truth—God the Father is filled with joy when sinners repent!

Jesus speaks of a shepherd searching for a lost sheep, a woman searching for a lost coin, and two sons who have lost their way with their father. Joy comes when the lost are found and redemption comes to the rebellious. As Luke 15:7 shows, for all of the things which could bring joy in heaven, a sinner’s spiritual transformation stands out as one of the greatest causes for celebration.

The teaching from Christ in Luke 15 begs for a question to be asked: What causes joy on earth? Specifically, what causes joy on the piece of earth where you and I live?

INTRODUCTION *(5 minutes)*

Leader: Use the “Introduction” material to begin today’s session.

To be like God, we should rejoice for the same thing—a lost person coming to know God. When a person turns their life from a “me-centered” life toward a “God-centered” life, our joy should be uncontrollable. In this week’s session, we will take a close look at our hearts and rediscover a great passion for sharing the gospel with lost people—those who Jesus came to seek and to save.

Evangelism, telling others about Jesus, should be done out of joy. It is not a duty we should perform out of guilt. It begins by grasping God's compassion for the lost and gaining His desire to reach them.

During *More to Life: Engaging Through Story* we will not aim to add to any feelings of failure or guilt that you may have. Rather, we want you to see the things God longs to do in and through every one of us.

Leader: Guide participants through a time of introducing themselves to one another.

OPENING SHARE TIME

(8 minutes)

Getting to Know You

A key aspect in gaining confidence and desire to share our faith is by becoming comfortable about discussing it with friends. Talking about our lives and discovering how God is working in others can be motivational and encouraging.

Break into groups of two or three and share some information about your life. Some of the things you share may include:

- Where you live; family; work; leisure interests
- What has been the most fun, exciting, or memorable thing you have ever done?
- What is the thing that you admire most about Jesus?



WATCH DVD CLIP 1: *Introduction (12 minutes)*

Leader: Guide participants through the following questions.

Dennis had a fascinating encounter in the carpet store.

- Do you know someone who was surprised to discover that Christians are “normal people” instead of “religious people”?
- How should we react to unbelievers who show this surprise?

Key Question

What is the most difficult: To get people outside of church interested in Jesus or to get people inside of church interested enough in people outside of church to tell them about Jesus?

In groups of three or four, discuss the Key Question by answering the following questions:

- Which do you think is most difficult?
- What makes each of them difficult?
- What might help believers become more interested in people outside of church?
- Do you ever feel guilty for not being very good at sharing Jesus with others? How do you handle these feelings?

Leader: Following the discussion time spend some time discussing each group's answers.

GROUP DISCUSSION *(5 minutes)*

- What would encourage you to want to tell other people about Jesus? Do we view them as God views them? Why or why not? Be honest as you discuss your passion for the lost as it compares with God's passion. There is no condemnation, no need for us to feel guilty—God can change us!

Jesus' declaration in Luke 19:10, “The Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost,” is the climax of a section of the gospel that begins in Luke 15. At the center of Jesus' words and actions is His sharing in the Father's passion for lost people. This is how He

wants His followers to be, not self-interested. Those who love God will share His passion for the lost.

- How do you feel when you consider the picture that Jesus paints of the loving Father who is filled with joy when the lost son returns? How do you react to the description of God from the DVD as being “absolutely passionate”?

The Passionometer is a rough “measure” of the depth of our passion for telling others about Jesus. It can help us to be honest about where we really are in relation to sharing our faith.

- What do you expect would be the result if we tested the passion of our church to sharing faith? Would our church be passionate or apathetic? What leads you to this conclusion?

Leader: Guide participants through the following questions and spend time teaching about the Passionometer.

ACTIVITY

The Passionometer (10 minutes)

Do we attend church without a thought to the lost, or do we see every day as an opportunity to help others come to a better understanding of Jesus? The Passionometer is a simple measure of your desire to reach the lost around you and increase your passion.

Directions:

Each person should honestly place a circle around the number that represents where they think they are on the scale. Ask them to share it with the person next to them or with a close friend in the group. Share what they have circled and pray with one another that God’s passion will grow in them.

P A S S I O N O M E T E R

1	Never witnessed to anyone and have no desire	Need a change of heart	Self interested
2			
3			
4			
5	Would like to witness more but hesitant	Need encouragement and equipping	Feel guilty
6			
7			
8			
9		Totally committed to God's passion for the lost	
10	Always witnessing		Motivated

Each of us will have been challenged in different ways during this session regarding our passion for evangelism and the lost.

- What are some of the common excuses believers give for not sharing their faith? What are the major obstacles you face to sharing your faith in Christ?
- How can passion help you in overcoming common obstacles to talking to others about Jesus?
- What causes the greatest joy in your church? In your life?



WATCH DVD CLIP 2:

Sharing in God's Passion (4 minutes)

Leader: Guide participants through the following questions.

- What is your reaction to Dennis's story of the man who was asked to leave church because he was dressed poorly?
- Dennis said, "If God loves the lost, then we will love the lost too, if we love God." How do you react to this statement?
- What are the temptations we face as believers to act more as the older brother in the parable found in Luke 15:11-31?
- God can change us and, through us, change the world. What changes are needed in our lives to love the lost?



WATCH DVD CLIP 3:

An Approach We All Can Use (1 minute)

Leader: Guide participants through group discussion questions.

GROUP DISCUSSION *(5 minutes)*

- Discuss Dennis' definition for evangelism:
"Evangelism is leaving the person that I've met with a better understanding of God than they would have had if they had never met me."
- Review the parts of the four-story approach to sharing your faith in Christ. How do you react to a method of sharing your faith that is as simple as telling your story?
- How do you feel about trusting God to use you to witness to others?

SUMMARY AND PRAYER

(5 minutes)

Leader: Give an overview of the Personal Engagement section of the workbook.

Everyone is encouraged to do the Personal Engagement section of their books. This can be done in one sitting but it is probably best to do this over several days in order to give time for reflection.

Each week, the Personal Engagement section will include:

- Bible Encounter—getting to grips with Scripture that is relevant to what is being discovered and experienced.
- Reflection—personalizing what is being experienced and responding to God.
- Stepping Out—practical things we can do outside of our comfort zone.
- Prayer—transparently opening ourselves up to God.
- Building Each Other Up—noting things that we are experiencing that may be good to share with others during the group discussions.

Prayer Time

Through prayer, we can come to know and reflect God's heart for the unbelievers around us. Perhaps some in the group need to become passionate about the lost whereas others need to begin acting on their passion.

Prayer Emphasis

Pray for one another, that God will fill each one with a passion and confidence to share their story with one person.

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