

jump

module

Consider

The Story so Far...

It all began when the eternal, personal God made everything there is as a perfect paradise. God intentionally made us as personal beings in his image and loves us passionately. But Adam rebelled against God, paradise was lost and evil became a horrific reality. Rebellion continued at Babel, where God was rejected; the people were spread all over the world and began their own religions. In his love for the peoples of the world, God decided to reach out for them. To do this, he chose Israel as his special people and put them in a special place for the special purpose of representing him to the nations. Jesus came and lived an incredible, perfect life; he made incredible claims and backed them up with incredible miracles. Jesus' mission was to pay the perfect ransom price for sin because he loves humanity with a perfect, passionate love. Jesus rose from the tomb, defeating death, because his death had successfully dealt with sin for ever.

Continuing the Story...

Although we have come to the end of the story, in a way our story does not end here. In this module, we explore how the story of Jesus affects us today.

Day One: Delia's Story (Faith is the Way to Eternal Life)

I was born and raised in the People's Republic of China, just after the Communist revolution of 1949. I was one of five children. Times were tough and we were very poor. My parents weren't Communist or Christian since they didn't have time to think about politics or religion. They were simple people who had to work very hard to get enough food for us to even survive.

We lived near a church but I never visited one. We didn't ever think or talk about God. Anyway, the churches were all destroyed after the Cultural Revolution of 1966.

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I graduated from university with degrees in Economics and English. Then I moved to teach at a university. About this time, the Cultural Revolution brought some foreign teachers to China to help with university education. I met a kind American teacher called Wendy (my colleague at university), who invited some of us to her home to talk, enjoy good food and learn English by reading the Bible. I wasn't interested in Christianity and I didn't want to join the Christian faith. All I wanted was to make friends and learn better English. Wendy gave each of us an English/Mandarin Bible for free! I was so impressed and thankful. Because I was poor, I had to value this wonderful, hardback book. I also wanted to honour Wendy's kindness by seriously reading it to improve my English. Our small group of English learners suggested meeting weekly. The foreigners were so friendly, kind and generous to us. I enjoyed their friendship but I didn't want their religion. It was too foreign and I cared only to learn English and to try and provide some help to my family who were so poor.

The more I got to know these foreigners, the more I liked them. They were good people who really cared about us. Why were they so happy? Why was their country so successful? Why did they have such good lives? Why did they leave it all, to come to help us in China? Why were they so generous? And what made them so strong that they were not afraid of our government? The Cultural Revolution destroyed all the Christian churches and told us they were a bad thing but I was seeing a very good thing. I was seeing really good people who were loving and kind to us. I liked them but, more than that, I wanted to be like them. Why were they so happy and kind? I kept reading the Bible and found the answer. Their faith in Jesus made them this way. He had changed their lives. Very slowly, I came to understand that not only was Jesus good, he was

perfect! And then I found the reason he was perfect was that he was God. I came to believe that Jesus was God. I kept reading more and found that Jesus had come to die for me to pay the penalty for my sin. That was hard. I knew I was not an excellent person but it took me some time to admit I was a very imperfect person deep inside. I trusted him as my saviour. Now my life is changed. I am so glad God found me and brought me to faith in his Son, Jesus.

Explore the Bible

Read John 6:40.

What happened to Delia when she had faith in Jesus?

Day Two: John's Story (Faith is about Trust)

In my late teens, four men came across my pathway: my school counsellor, two guys from the US who were living in New Zealand and a pastor who was trying to spend time with my Jewish girlfriend's parents. All of them were Christians and wanted me to be one too but it wasn't sitting too well with me. There were some roadblocks. What about evolution? How could God send 'good people' to hell?

These guys impressed me. I needed to think things through for myself. I started reading some of the Old Testament prophecies about the coming Messiah, about where he was to be born, how he was to be born, how he would die (blow-by-blow graphic accounts) and how he would be raised from the dead. I had no doubt those prophecies had come true in the life of Jesus. There were also a whole lot more prophecies that were still to be fulfilled. I had the sense as I read these prophecies from the Bible that there was something really big going on in the world, something very big, and I wanted to be a part of it. I wanted my Jewish girlfriend to be part of it too. I went to the synagogue and bought her an English translation of the Hebrew Bible so I could show her what I had found.

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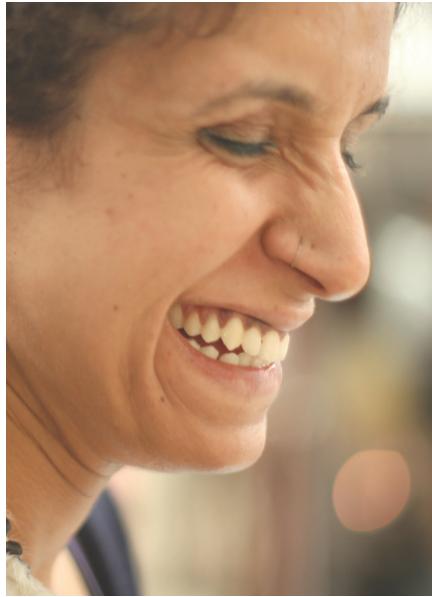
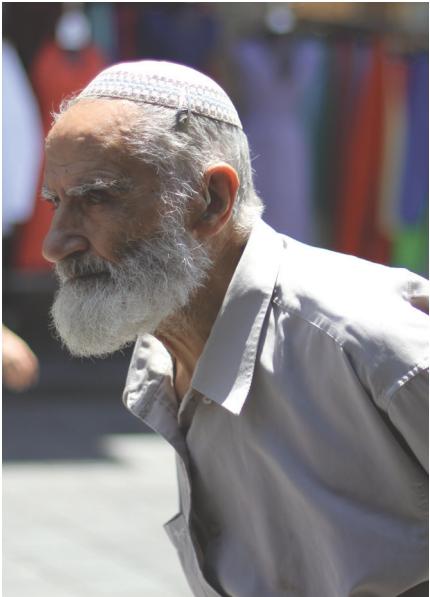
The more I learned, the more I wanted to know. Would this God accept me? I had the idea that life was pretty much one big exam. If I tried to do enough good things, when I died and faced God, things would hopefully be okay and I'd find myself on the right side of the ledger. I started thinking that if God is holy (I mean infinitely holy), I'd need a 100% pass in the exam for every year, for the whole of my life. I couldn't achieve that for one day, let alone one year!

I learned from the Bible that the consequence of not being good enough was that I was disconnected from God now and, if I died like that, I would be separated from him forever. Then it clicked. When I was in my first year of medical school, I discovered that while I could never pass the holiness exam myself, someone had. That someone was Jesus. He lived a perfect life. He died to pay the penalty of my failure. And, because he paid the penalty for my sin, God was willing to scratch out my poor, pitiful and woefully inadequate exam mark, and instead give me his 100% pass. It wasn't about me trying to please God by myself. I couldn't. It was about me acknowledging my failure and accepting the free gift of eternal life found in Jesus Christ. By myself, one night, I prayed and made the decision to trust Christ. I can't describe the sense of relief, excitement and peace I experienced and still have! Roll on forever!

Explore the Bible

Read Romans 4:5.

What did John have to stop doing? What did he have to trust?



Day Three: Kathryn's Story (Faith Focuses on Jesus)

I grew up in a church-attending family (not a perfect one but a church-going one). So I learned about God. When I was 13, I was 'confirmed' and became a 'youth-group girl'. Not for long, though. My parents separated when I was 15 and I slowly drifted into a 'more colourful' life. I wish I could say it was a more successful life, or a more fulfilling one. It was a wild adventure for a while but the truth is it all went really wrong. It's messy, too sad for words. Bad things happened to me. I did things I never ever thought I would do just because I was desperate. I was sad and completely broken. Inside I was falling apart. A counsellor told me I was right on the edge of losing my own soul.

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I shared my desperation with a friend. She told me of a local church where I might find help. I knew there was a God and I knew I needed his help. But would I find him? Did he really care? Would it make a difference?

Let's be honest, some churches disappoint us. But this one was an exception. The people there knew God personally and they were filled with his love. I know this, because they channelled God's love to me. It blew my mind. They prayed for me and my son. They cared for us in real, practical ways by giving us food and a place to stay. They were genuinely there for us and asked nothing in return. God had heard my cry. He was showing himself to be real and that he loved and cared for me and had a better life waiting for me.

But I needed more than 'religion' (I'd grown up with that). I needed to know God for myself, like they knew him. I needed God to be more than an idea. I really needed to connect with him.

They invited me to a Bible study where I found more mind-blowing discoveries. I had no idea of the real story of the Bible but I was hungry to learn. It was then that I discovered Jesus, the Lamb of God. He was the one who laid down his life and paid the penalty for my sin so I could be connected to the living God.

Have all my problems disappeared? No, but my life has changed and I have changed. I am in touch with the living God. I'm in his hands. Now I pass my problems on to him because he cares for me. I'm free and life is so different now. I feel like I've been saved.

Explore the Bible

Read 1 Corinthians 15:2–4.

What did Kathryn need to believe about Jesus?



Day Four: Faiva's Story (Faith has a Moment)

I was raised in a village in the islands of the South Pacific. My folks were good, God-fearing people. Life was simple, strict and religious. Church was compulsory. No excuses! Baptised as a baby, I grew up learning the teachings and observing the rituals of the Church. That's the way our family worked.

Going to college was an eye-opener. When some friends took me to their Scripture Union Bible studies, it was so different to what I was used to. These were warm, personal, lively discussions. Everything focused on the Bible and everyone took part. People were reading the Bible for themselves, thinking about what it was saying and sharing their thoughts. I was used to more formal instruction where we were told our beliefs. I kept my Scripture Union involvement secret from my family because I thought they might have seen it as a betrayal.

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After college, I attended a one-year pre-university class. A young teacher was helping me with extra tuition. He became a friend, helped me with my studies, introduced me to volleyball and slowly began sharing his faith with me. I was interested but I was also interested in hanging out with the local guys doing the usual guy things like drinking and smoking dope. My teacher friend knew about this other side of my life but he remained a friend. We'd still hang out together, going to the beach and attending youth meetings and Christian camps. Then he introduced me to his family who really welcomed me. They were so warm and hospitable. They talked about the Bible together so naturally and prayed together. It was so different to the colder, more-formal religion I had known.

Then one night at a youth meeting, the speaker shared with us the words of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of John 5:24. Suddenly it all became very clear to me. Eternal life doesn't come through religious rituals and good works but it's all about believing. All this time, I had been thinking and hoping my religious works would earn me eternal life. But Jesus said eternal life comes through believing only. That night, I committed myself to Christ as my saviour. He had died for my sins and paid the penalty for them in full. God had shown his acceptance of Christ's death for my sin by raising him from the dead. The fear of condemnation was gone!

Explore the Bible

Read John 5:24.

How did this verse make it clear that the moment Faiva believed he would have eternal life?

Day Five: Gary's Story (Faith Makes All the Difference)

I grew up in a Christian home, so I've always had some 'inside information' about Christianity. I remember when I was about eight years old, my dad and I were watching the movie *Jesus of Nazareth*. I can still hear my dad telling me, "If that guy didn't die on the cross for you, you would never have eternal life".

But the Christian thing wasn't for me. I was anything but a good little Christian kid. I refused to believe all the Christian stuff. I chose to live my teenage years my own way. It was a very wild ride. I honestly thought religion was a load of rubbish and I lived my life saying it. The only time I mentioned God was when I cursed him and that was often! I was a sinner and proud of it.

It's hard to believe this happened but I came to a real, personal faith in Christ when I was nearly 20. I never expected to have anything to do with God!

Here's how it happened. A Christian man gave me a job, and then he told me about his journey as a Christian. He talked to me about Christ and told me how God had given Christ, his Son, to pay for all our sin. He explained that if I personally trusted in Christ, I would not have to suffer God's judgement myself forever. What he said just rang true deep inside me. I trusted Christ as my personal saviour.

The best thing about being a Christian is knowing that I have been made right with God. If God is holy, he must deal with sin, including mine. Because of Christ's death, I have been saved from eternal hell. I am free from condemnation.

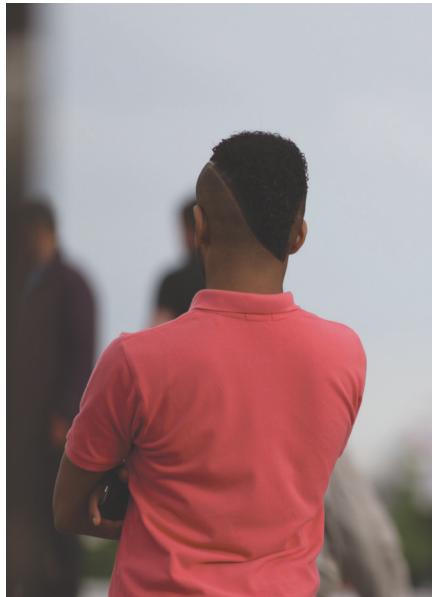
And since trusting Christ, I have become part of this huge Christian family. I have some amazing genuine and deep friendships. We are family because we have God as our father. I belong to these people and they belong to me.

I wish I could describe for you the deep peace in my soul. I belong to my Creator and that belonging will last for ever. Life for me is about deep and lasting peace, real assurance and a living hope.

Explore the Bible

Read John 3:36.

How important was it for Gary to believe in Jesus?



Explore

Discussion starter

Q – Has the story from the Bible changed the way you think about Christianity? If so, then how?

Q – What were some of the highlights from the readings?

Reading

Read John 3:16–18.

Volunteers may like to read out loud a part or all of this story.

Q – According to this reading, how important is it to believe in who Jesus is and what he did on the cross?

View

Video episode 11 – jump

Five things God wants us to know about faith:

1. Faith is the way to life.
2. Faith is about
3. Faith focuses on
4. Faith has a
5. Faith makes the

Discuss

Questions I have

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For more information...
see www.longstoryshort.co/jump





