

UNPACKING YOUR FAITH STORIES

A Four-Session Faith Sharing Curriculum
by Kay Kotan

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Welcome to *Unpacking Your Faith Stories*! If you fear the very thought of evangelism, you have come to the right place. You hold in your hands the resources to journey with a small group to learn to capture your faith story and practice sharing it. Come join others in a safe place to discover, practice and gain confidence in sharing your unique faith story as God calls each of us to do.

GATHERING THE GROUP

Gather a group of eight to twelve people for a four-week adventure. Your group may already be assembled (i.e. Sunday school class, small group, life group) and choose to work through this four-part series. This may also be a great time to gather up and resource people from your leadership team (board/council), nominations committee, staff/ministry team leaders, evangelism/invite team, connection team, or hospitality team. This could also be a wonderful opportunity to gather a group of people who have a desire to share their faith, but feel ill-equipped to do so. These materials could also be on-going resources for your church's discipleship pathway. "Witness" is part of our commitment as members of the United Methodist Church. This is a great teaching resource to meet this discipling commitment. These materials could also be coupled with a four-part sermon series and all-church study.

Remember, personal invitation with clear expectations is always a best practice for assembling groups. Lead with "why" the group experience will be meaningful and worth the investment of time rather than only describing what you are inviting someone into. There is no required reading or homework for this journey!

Choose a time that is convenient for the group to be fully engaged for sixty minutes. While the materials are designed to fit into a one-hour timeframe, you may add social components to this journey. For example, you could gather for some fellowship time before starting the class. Just be sure to add that



time into the commitment expectations for your participants. Do not forget about setting up childcare if that is a need of your group.



RESOURCES & FORMAT

For each session, a participant handout will be provided by the Center for Vitality through the Arkansas Conference's vitaldisciples.org website. A facilitator's guide is also provided. A wallet card is provided to download as a participant reminder of the steps in *Unpacking Your Faith Stories*. Each session will carry the same format. A short video clip will be provided for each session to launch conversation and reinforce learning.

Resources Include:

- Facilitator's Guide
- Participant Handout
- Videos for Each Session
- Reminder Card

Sixty-Minute Format:

Prayer
Scripture
Topic introduction
Video clip
Practice lab
Take-away
Action step
Prayer

Learning to share our faith stories takes time and practice. Be patient and grace-filled with one another. These resources are not meant to offer once and done. We struggle with the act of faith sharing let alone the expectation of doing so. Offering this learning opportunity on a regular basis will strengthen your congregation's confidence in sharing their faith stories leading to an invitational culture for your church!

May you be blessed on this faithful journey!

Kay Kotan

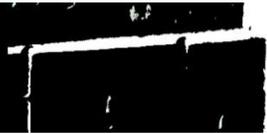


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UNPACKING YOUR FAITH STORIES



FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

Thank you for facilitating this experience for your group. This is important Kingdom work! Thank you for your ministry.

You will be gathering your group for four sessions. If your group is an already-assembled group as mentioned previously, no introductions will be needed. But, if this is a newly assembled group, you might allow a somewhat longer session for your first gathering to get to know one another a bit. You might have each person introduce him/herself and share why they chose to participate in this journey. This allows us to hear the motivations of the participants and begin to build trust and intimacy with one another.

Remember, if you add a social component to the group experience, be sure to add that time to the format and participant expectations. For example, if a 15-minute gathering/fellowship time is added, advertise the group as a 75-minute small group experience.

This resource is a dive-deeper and action step opportunity for the presentation from Annual Conference 2017 Session presented by Kay Kotan. While this resource can be used without the presentation, it is certainly available as a launch to the four-part series. If you choose to launch with watching the video of the presentation, you would simply add a fifth session. The presentation is 60-minutes.

Each of the four sessions will follow the same 60-minute format:

- Prayer (3 minutes)
- Scripture (2 minutes)
- Topic introduction (2 minutes)
- Video clip (5 minutes)
- Practice lab (30 minutes)
- Take-away (10 minutes)
- Action step (5 minutes)
- Prayer (3 minutes)

You will find specifics for each session following. The numbers beside each item in the agenda above is the approximate timeframe allocated for each. There is, of course, some flexibility within the format,



but these guidelines will help keep you on track to finish on time to honor the participants' time. Notice the practice lab is the bulk of the hour. While this opportunity has some learning and awareness components, this is primarily intended to be experiential in a safe place to explore and practice. As a facilitator, it is important to share this with the participants and help create the space for this to occur. Included you will find the key points of each session to keep the group on track and make sure those points come out in conversation.

Following is the specific information for each session. You will want to provide the Participant Handout to each person for each session. You may need to provide pens, too. After each session, the handouts can be taken home by each participant as a reminder of the learnings from the session and the call to action.

Thank you once again for your ministry in serving as a facilitator for this group experience. May you be blessed in your facilitation!

SESSION ONE

DISCOVER: Live life fully aware of God's presence

Sixty-Minute Session Format:



Prayer

Oh, Holy One, we often move about life with our blinders on. In our hustle and bustle world, we are often distracted by the busy-ness of life. We lose sight of you and how you intersect with our daily lives. Lord, open us up to seeing you every day. Open our eyes to your moving, prodding, whispering, and nudging. Help us to see the people you have placed in our paths with purpose. Lord, help us to live life with the intentional purpose of being your follower. In Jesus's name, we prayer. Amen



Scripture

Revelation 3:20 (NRSV)

Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.



Topic introduction

(distribute handout)

Over our four sessions together, we will be learning how to *Unpack Our Faith Stories*: Discover, Catch, Share & Live.

DISCOVER: Live life fully aware of God's presence

CATCH: Capture your faith moments/stories

SHARE: Gift your faith moments/stories to others

LIVE: Live out your faith through prayers, presence, gifts, service, & *witness*

Hand out the Reminder Cards to each participant. These cards are helpful reminders of the steps to unpack and share our faith stories. Each week we will look at one step in the process. Tonight we start with *Discover: Live life fully aware of God's presence*. In this session, we will be exploring how we might begin to more fully notice God working in each of our individual daily lives.

We sometimes get so caught up in our day-to-day responsibilities, rushing from one activity to the next, and our To Do Lists that we lose awareness of God's presence in our lives. Let's take a look at the video clip to get us started.



Video clip

View the video clip with the group.



Practice lab

Questions for Group Discussion:

1. Many find that being routinely aware of God's presence is a difficult practice. Why do you think that might be the case?
2. What do you think are some common obstacles that might keep you from noticing God's presence in your life?
3. What practices have helped (or could help) you notice God's presence more readily?
4. How might an accountability partner help in beginning to discover how God is working in your life? Who might that be for you and what would that look like?

Key Concepts:

- *Living life fully aware and in anticipation of God's presence informs our faith.*
- *When we notice God in our lives, we can better share our stories with others.*
- *Accountability is key: when we know we will be asked how God is working in our lives, we are better at noticing.*

Time to Practice:

Divide the group in pairs or triads. Ask them to share with their partner(s) where God is working in their lives right now. Where have they seen God most recently intersecting in their lives?



Take-away

Call the group back together. Ask each person to share their take-away for today's session. This could be a learning, a new awareness, or a shift of some sort.



Action step

Ask each participant to return to this session's participant handout. Ask them to write down what action step they are willing to take in noticing God's presence in his/her life in the upcoming week. Who will hold them accountable for the action step?



Prayer

Almighty and all-knowing God, we come to you this day asking for forgiveness and with thankfulness. God, forgive us for the times we have ignored your presence and your workings in our lives. God, we are grateful and thankful for your undying love and grace for each of us. Lord, in the upcoming week, help us to live our lives more fully aware of you and how you are moving in each of our lives on a daily basis. Open our lives, Lord, we want to see you – discover you each day! In Jesus's name, we pray. Amen

SESSION TWO

CATCH: Capture your faith moments/stories

Sixty-Minute Session Format:



Prayer

Almighty God, we come to you today with an open mind and an open heart to capture you in our lives. Be with us as we explore the stories you gift us with through your presence and power. Lord, we love you, but your love for us is far greater than we can imagine. Help us to be opened to your loving presence in our lives so that we could capture those precious moments. In Jesus's name, we pray. Amen



Scripture

Matthew 10:32 (CEB)

Therefore, everyone who acknowledges me before people, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven.



Topic introduction

(distribute handout)

Last week we talked about noticing God's presence in our lives that might go unnoticed. We explored how to better notice where and how God is showing up in our daily lives. Today, we will look at the next step in unpacking our faith stories, *Catch: Capture your faith moments/stories*. We will be exploring how to capture the stories of God's presence and moving in our lives. It is one thing to notice God's presence, yet it is something else to begin to catch those moments. Let's take a look at video to learn more.



Video clip

View the video clip with the group.



Practice lab

Questions for Group Discussion:

1. Why is it important to capture our "God stories" or our "faith stories?"
2. Why do you think it is difficult for some people to catch their faith stories?
3. What have you found helpful (or could find helpful) in capturing or catching our own personal faith stories?
4. Think of a time that someone has shared one of their faith stories with you. What kind of impact did it have on you and your faith journey?

Key Concepts:

- *Before we can share our faith with others, we must first notice and capture our own faith story.*
- *People are most often first intrigued by someone's personal story of "why God" before they become interested in church.*
- *Not knowing our own faith stories is like not knowing our own family heritage.*

Time to Practice:

Divide the group into different pairs or triads from last session. This gives us the opportunity to expand our comfort in sharing our faith stories. Last week the Practice Lab time had us sharing where God is working in our lives. Today we will be exploring the stories of where God has intersected our lives in ways that have formed our faith and might help others in their next step on their faith journey. Ask each partner(s) share a faith story with one another.



Take-away

Call the group back together. Ask each person to share their take-away for today's session. This could be a learning, a new awareness, or a shift of some sort.



Action step

Ask each participant to return to this session's participant handout. Ask them to write down what action step they are willing to take in capturing their unique faith story in his/her life in the upcoming week. Who will hold them accountable for the action step?



Prayer

Precious Lord, we thank you for this time together today. We thank you for the vulnerability demonstrated within this group today as we seek to become more faithful in both noticing your presence in our daily lives and capturing those stories of our lives in your presence. Help us to live more fully aware of you. Guide us. Teach us. Mold us into being more Christ-like each day. In Jesus's name, we pray. Amen

SESSION THREE

SHARE: Gift your faith moments/stories to others

Sixty-Minute Session Format:



Prayer

All-knowing God, we come to you this day with a yearning to know you more deeply and to share our stories of you more widely. Lord, let us be open and noticing to your presence today during our time together. We come with open hearts and minds in how you might expand our individual understanding of you and grow in our relationships with you. Remove our fears and our anxieties in our work for you, Dear Lord. For it is in your precious son's name, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen



Scripture

2 Corinthians 5:19-20 (MSG)

God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. We're Christ's representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God's work of making things right between them. We're speaking for Christ himself now: Become friends with God; he's already a friend with you.



Topic introduction

(distribute handout)

In our first session, we explored noticing God in our daily lives. In our last session, we worked on catching our God or faith stories. In this session, *Share: Gift your faith moments/stories to others*, we will be taking that next step. Today we will explore how to share our stories of our faith life or our faith journey. Let's take a look at our video clip to hear more about sharing our story.



Video clip

View the video clip with the group.



Practice lab

Questions for Group Discussion:

1. It is one thing for us to notice and capture our faith stories, but it is another to share our stories with others. Why do you believe sharing our stories is important to our own faith journey?
2. Why do you think sharing your faith story is important to others to hear?
3. How do you think the lack of sharing our faith stories has impacted our culture over the past decade? Today?
4. What kind of impact could a church make in their local community if we were all more active in sharing our faith stories?

Key Concepts:

- *Sharing our story is the act of being a disciple.*
- *Telling others about Jesus is not optional. It is essential.*
- *Sharing is not pushing or imposing. Sharing is about walking alongside people in relationship telling about how God has impacted your life.*

Time to Practice:

Divide the group in pairs or triads. Ask each partner to share where they show up in places of un-churched people. How is each partner building intentional relationships with un-churched people so that they might have the opportunity to share their faith story? Discuss how your church creates opportunities for the congregation to build relationships with the un-churched in the mission field so that faith stories might be shared.



Take-away

Call the group back together. Ask each person to share their take-away for today's session. This could be a learning, a new awareness, or a shift of some sort.



Action step

Ask each participant to return to this session's participant handout. Ask them to write down what action step they are willing to take in sharing their unique faith story in his/her life in the upcoming week. Who will hold them accountable for the action step?



Prayer

Oh, Holy One, we are grateful for our time of learning and sharing together. We are thankful for your presence today as we wrestle with this sometimes-difficult expectation of sharing our faith stories. God, continue to guide us and challenge us so that we become better story tellers of your love and grace in our own individual lives. Lord, you put us in particular places with certain people because you need for us to be your messenger. Help us to better recognize when you are calling on us for this important work. Give us courage and strength to answer your call to tell our faith story that you have gifted us. In Jesus's name, we pray. Amen

SESSION FOUR

LIVE: Live out your faith through prayers, presence, gifts, service, & witness

Sixty-Minute Session Format:



Prayer

Almighty God, we come here for our final session this day with humbled hearts. God, you are so very good. Through these sessions, we have felt your touch and encouragement. God, we just ask that you continue to be here with us today as we dive even deeper into sharing our faith stories. Challenge us today that we may be more Christ-like in how we encounter the world and demonstrate your teachings in our daily lives. In Jesus's name, we pray. Amen



Scripture

James 1:22-24 (MSG)

Don't fool yourself into thinking that you are a listener when you are anything but, letting the Word go in one ear and out the other. Act on what you hear! Those who hear and don't act are like those who glance in the mirror, walk away, and two minutes later have no idea who they are, what they look like.



Topic introduction

(distribute handout)

Today is our fourth and final session. In our first session, we explored how to notice God's working in our lives. In our second session, we talked about how to catch those faith stories. Last session, we explored sharing our faith stories with others – particularly the un-churched. In our final session this evening, *Live: Live out your faith through prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness*, we will discover what it might mean to live out our life of faith. Let's now take a look at the video clip to get us started.



Video clip

View the video clip with the group.



Practice lab

Questions for Group Discussion:

1. What does it mean for you to live out your faith walk in your daily life?
2. How are you currently living out your faith? Where are you struggling in living out your faith through prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness?
3. Why do you think witness is typically the most difficult of the five commitments to practice we make as a United Methodist member?
4. Why do you think "witness" was added to the United Methodist membership vow recently? Why do you think it wasn't in the vow before?

Key Concepts:

- *Living your faith is far beyond attending church. It is a daily practice of living as a disciple of Christ.*
- *Doing good deeds is only part of our task. We must also share the good news.*
- *Mature disciples disciple others.*

Time to Practice:

For our last session, each participant will be asked to share a short (1-2 minute) faith story with the group. This exercise is meant to help each participant practice so they can become more confident in sharing outside the confines of the group and the church. In addition, it will allow the participants to hear a variety of stories and see the impact of the stories on the group as a whole.



Take-away

Ask each person to share their take-away for today's session. This could be a learning, a new awareness, or a shift of some sort.



Action step

Ask each participant to return to this session's participant handout. Ask them to write down what action step they are willing to take in more fully living out their faith through prayer, presence, gifts, service and *witness*. Who will hold them accountable for the action step?



Prayer

All-knowing God, you know each of us intimately. You know our fears. You know our anxieties. You provided our spiritual giftedness. Lord God, we ask that you continue to help us notice you in our lives, capture the stories of our faith, share our faith stories, and most importantly that we live our daily lives pleasing to you as we pray, are present to worship you, we return the gifts you have provided, we serve you and your people, and we share with others your goodness, love, and grace. In Jesus's name, we pray. Amen



Parting Challenge

As we end our time together, I want to offer a challenge to all of us. Carry your wallet card to remind each of us to *unpack our faith stories* on an on-going basis. Remember: Discover, Catch, Share, & Live!



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mrs. Kay Kotan is the Director of Congregational Development at the Susquehanna Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. A credentialed coach, church consultant, speaker and author, she was one of the principal creators for the Healthy Church Initiative process in the Missouri Annual Conference. She also created the Small Church Initiative as part of the Missouri Conference Initiative. Kay is a sought-after speaker and workshop leader throughout the denomination, including serving as the keynote speaker at the Center for Vitality's 2016 Grow By One Summit. She is an ICF credentialed coach, consultant and trainer. In addition, she is a Path One Coach and has served on the Faculty of Coaching4Clergy.

Kay has a passion to serve churches of all sizes, and has written or coauthored twelve books. Some of those books include: *Renovate or Die*; *A Day of New Beginnings: Helping Small Churches Remember and Discover New Paths Forward*; *Gear Up: Nine Essentials Processed for the Optimized Church*; *Building Worship Bridges: Worship to Accelerate Neighborhood Connections*; *Mission Possible: Structuring Your Church for Missional Effectiveness*; and *Necessary Nine: Things Effective Pastors Do Differently*.

Kay is an active layperson who is passionate about being a disciple of Jesus Christ. Kay is committed to use her call as a layperson to help churches, pastors, and other laypersons serve Jesus Christ and to help churches vision for a renewed future. She has been married for twenty-five years to her husband, Bob, and they have one son, Cameron.

Learn more about Kay at kaykotan.com



ABOUT THE PRODUCTION TEAM

These materials were commissioned by The Center for Vitality, a center of the Arkansas Conference Ministries of the United Methodist Church, for Bishop Mueller's 2017-2018 *VITAL!* Emphasis. Our production partners include the staff from the Arkansas Conference Center for Technology, who assisted in printed materials and video editing, and the video production team of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kansas, who filmed the instructional videos with Kay Kotan for this curriculum.

CFV Purpose: The Arkansas Conference Center for Vitality provides resources for pastors, laity, and congregations to experience spiritual revival and become vital congregations that make disciples of Jesus Christ, who makes disciples equipped to transform lives, communities, and the world.

CFV Primary Focus: The Center for Vitality leads in addressing Next Steps 1, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the Bishop's Mission Plan. The Center collaborates on all other Next Steps to resource the creation of vital congregations.



Learn more about the Center for Vitality at vitality.arumc.org.

VIDEO TRANSCRIPTS

These scripts from the videos by Kay Kotan are provided to assist facilitators in the case of technical failures of A/V equipment, and to offer an additional resource for you as plan for each session. The videos provided at vitaldisciples.org are each around 5 minutes long.



Kay Kotan Video Transcript for Session One: Intro & Discover

Hello and welcome to Unpacking Your Faith Stories! Thanks for joining us on this journey of faith stories discovery. Over the next four sessions, we will be learning how to discover and unpack your faith story. Each session will unpack one of the progressive steps in the process. Those four steps are:

DISCOVER: Live life fully aware of God's presence

CATCH: Capture your faith moments or stories

SHARE: Gift your faith moments or stories to others

LIVE: Live out your faith through prayers, presence, gifts, service & witness

Today we will begin our journey together on the first step in unpacking your faith story: DISCOVER. Each of us are called individually and collectively to share our own faith stories so that those who don't yet know Christ might come to know Christ. Sharing our faith story is part of our responsibility and blessing of being a disciple.

Yet we often struggle with how to share our faith story. Christians often feel ill-equipped or fearful. Often, we believe sharing our faith is about our ability to cite the Bible with just the perfect story or just the perfect verse. Most people aren't looking for the Bible stories right off the bat. Instead, they are most curious about why you believe in God. Or, how your relationship with Jesus Christ impacts your life day to day. There will be a time to teach about the stories in the Bible and God later, but first they need to see value or the life difference in being a Christian.

As Christians, we often go about our daily lives without full awareness of God's presence. In order to share how we see God at work in our lives (our faith stories) we must first become fully aware of how God is intersecting in our lives.



Where is God at work in your life? Where has God shown up? How do you see God working in the life of your family? Friends? What are those times when you had no doubt that God was in the midst of a life situation – perhaps a time of great joy or perhaps a time of great desperation? Maybe it was something seemingly small, but had a profound impact on you? Are you actively searching for God’s presence? In our book, *Get Their Name*, we referred to this as having your God radar engaged. Are you going about life with your radar fully engaged noticing God perfect presence?

Accountability is key in the life of a disciple. Who is on this journey with you? Who will you invite to become your accountability partner? Our founder, Wesley, called out this responsibility of accountability as part of being in those first classes or bands. In those classes and bands, fellow Christians had a place to share their personal faith journey, where God is working in their lives, and where, how, and who they were sharing their faith stories with. When we know we will be asked how God is working in our lives, we are much better at being aware and noticing!

Now it is time for your practice lab. This is a time to for unpacking this first step with one another in your group, answer some questions, and practice with a partner.

I do pray your participation in this journey is a blessing to you and to those in your path who don’t yet know Christ.



Kay Kotan Video Transcript for Session Two: Catch

Last session we unpacked how to live life more fully aware so that you could discover how God is working in your life. Today we will be exploring step two in the process: Catch – capture your faith moments or stories. Once you begin to discover how God is working in your life, you will be ready to unpack the next step of turning the discovering into catching.

Noticing God's work in your life is one thing, but what are we to do with that discovering, that knowing, that experiencing? Those moments are a part of your life and your faith journey. It is through connecting our life experiences to our faith journey that strengthens us as a disciple. That connection is also meant to be captured. If God's presence in our lives is but a fleeting moment or experience, then what is this Christian life all about? God calls us to be His hands and feet here on Earth. We can only do that if we are in tune with how God is showing up in our lives routinely.

We all love a good story. We are drawn into the twists and turns as the story unfolds. We are lured by the parallels of their story and our own life stories. Our faith stories are not only about "life," but they are about our life through the lens of faith. Our stories reveal such things as God's grace, love, and hope in the midst of life's up and downs. Those that don't have a relationship with Christ are often looking for those very things – grace, love and hope. Discovering and capturing our faith stories allows us to share our own life struggles and victories and how those journeys intersect with our faith.

Our world is no longer church-centric. Nationally, it is estimated that approximately only 22% of Americans are in church weekly. The number of unchurched is growing. Some unchurched believe Christians are hypocrites or highly judgmental. As Christians today living in a largely unchurched world, we must begin by identifying our own stories of our faith journey in order to walk alongside people and sharing the importance and impact our faith has on our everyday lives. Without our intentional capturing of those faith stories, we will indeed never have the opportunity to share them.

When our families gather, especially our extended family, there are often stories shared. Some stories are told over and over again. Those stories reveal who we are and what experiences we have had. Sometimes those stories are of those who have gone before us. Other times the stories are of recent times. All those stories are the tapestry that makes up who we are as a family. The same can be said about your faith stories. Your faith stories make up the tapestry of your life as a Christian in the family of God. Not knowing your faith stories is like not knowing your own family heritage.



Kay Kotan Video Transcript for Session Three: Share

In our first session of Unpacking Your Faith Stories, we unpacked the first step in how to discover your faith stories. In our second session, we unpacked the second step in how to catch your faith stories. In this third session, we will unpack the third step in the process - share. In this session, we will learn how to gift your faith moments or stories to others.

In this third step, we begin to move outside of ourselves. We go beyond “being” a Christian to “doing” the works of being a Christian. Once we begin to live life fully aware of God’s presence and capture the stories of that presence, we are then called to go and share those stories. The stories are not for us to keep to ourselves. They are for sharing. Your faith stories demonstrate such things as God’s love, grace, and hope. So many people have a thirst to hear stories of love, grace, and hope.

Think of your favorite book or movie. What would have been missing had you never heard or experienced the story? Think of your favorite family story. What if that experience was never shared? What awareness, joy, or learning would be missing if that story were locked away never to be shared? Stories of our lives mold us and speak of who we are as it relates to being a Christian.

Telling others about our life as a Jesus follower is not optional; it is essential. It is one of the spiritual disciplines Christians are called to practice. How are new people to learn of Jesus if we, his followers, keep silent? The Bible instructs ALL followers of Christ to share their faith. We often expect our pastors to do all the evangelism work. Or maybe we put an evangelism team together to delegate our evangelism work to. Whatever the case may be, we Christians have gotten out of the practice of sharing our faith stories. Perhaps, we have even forgotten or maybe even never been taught of the expectation of sharing our faith stories with others. We must once again begin practicing the spiritual discipline of faith sharing as Jesus instructed us to do.

When we consider sharing our faith stories, we will want to approach it from a relational perspective. Sharing our faith stories is not about pushing, judging, or imposing. Sharing is about walking alongside people in relationship first and then telling about how God has impacted your life. Keep in mind, faith sharing is not generally a starting point with people. Before someone is willing to really hear your story, there must first be a relationship. The relationship must be grounded in trust and authenticity. Without a meaningful, trusting relationship first, the person you want to share with will likely not be receptive. They may hear it as “preachy and condemning” rather than the heartfelt story of God’s intersection in your life and your desire for them to experience it, too.



Who is in your life now, with whom you already have a relationship, who has not yet heard your faith story? Who could you build a relationship with so that you might be able to share your faith story with in the future?



Kay Kotan Video Transcript for Session Four: Live

Last session we unpacked how to share your faith stories after learning how to discover and capture them in sessions one and two. Today we will be exploring step four in the process: Live – live out your faith through prayers, presence, gifts, service, and *witness*.

What does it mean to be a Christian? How would someone just meeting you know you were a Christian? How does your life look different than those who don't follow Jesus? How would someone experience you as a Christian differently than a non-Christian?

We often get stuck as Christians – stuck in our doing and our thinking. Perhaps we get off track from time to time. That's understandable and okay. It happens to most all of us. The real question lies in how we continue to mature in our faith in Jesus. Too many times we stop growing. We get stuck. We get stale. As Christians we are never finished or we never quite arrive – we are called to be moving on towards perfection – also aspiring to be more like Jesus. Too many believe that if they go to church for an hour on Sunday and to take up their space in the pew and throw a buck in the plate, they are living life as a Christian. I might suggest this is a good start, but it is only part of being a Christian – a fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ.

As Christians who are United Methodists, we members take a membership vow. That vow includes living out your faith through prayers, presence, gifts, service AND witness. Notice the word "and" not "or." We are to have an active prayer life, be present at both worship and discipleship growth opportunities, share our gifts (both monetary and spiritual), give of our time in good deeds, AND witness (sharing our faith stories). Not only are all these aspects of Christian living a part of our membership vow as a United Methodist, but they are also the disciplines Jesus clearly outlined for us to follow. Mature disciples understand the church is not for them or about them. Rather, mature disciples see the church as a means to bring others into relationship with Christ. Simply put, mature disciples *disciple others*. Mature disciples no longer require to be "fed." Instead they "feed" others spiritually.

Discipleship is a daily practice. Discipleship is also a continuous work in progress. If we are not growing, we are likely moving backwards. How are you working to grow in your faithfulness to be more like Jesus? Who is holding you accountable for your faith walk?



As Christians, we often choose (both individually and as a congregation) to be passive about our witness. We often do many good deeds – which is great. Yet, we most generally forget to share the good news. We often write checks and donate items (like food, coats, socks, school supplies) – which are all good things- but we often forget or choose not to tell them about Jesus, too. I refer to this as passive evangelism. Our hope and desire is that people receiving our gifts will be blessed and know the “why” behind the gift and suddenly appear on the church door step next week.

But, generally, people don’t have any idea where the gifts come from and more importantly they don’t know the why behind the gifts – Jesus! How can we shift some of our good deeds to opportunities to build relationships with the unchurched in our communities so that we might have the opportunity to share our faith stories? Connect good deeds and the good news!