

World Hunger
Campaign

FAMILY DEVOTIONAL

Changing
the story



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WEEKEND ACTIVITY # 1

Peter Fish Belongs in the Story

At your church, you may have received a Peter Fish bank to use alongside this devotional booklet. You can use it to save your money over the next three weeks. Your gifts will help people who are poor learn new ways to make a living, help farmers learn new ways of farming so they can grow enough food for their families, help young people who left school be able to return and get an education, and help people who were fighting with each other learn new ways to live in peace.

If you didn't receive a fish bank, that's OK. You can decorate a recycled can or other container to save your gift-money. This bank is meant to remind us of how God makes old things new in our lives and in the lives of people in need. A

new bank made out of an old container would be a great way to remember this.

When you eat with your family, you probably set a place at the table for everyone you're expecting to come to the meal. How about making a special placemat for your bank? Get a large sheet of white paper and design it to look like a book cover. You could write **Change the Story** on the cover, then decorate it in any way you choose.

Use this placemat as a place of honor on your table for your bank. Each day after you and your family read the devotions, write the names of the people you've just read about on your placement as a reminder to pray for them and other people in need.



DAY 1

Changing the Story

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:
The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

We all love to hear a great story. Some stories are filled with adventure and interesting people. Other stories remind us that even stories that start sad can have a happy ending. No matter what the story, it is fun to listen and imagine what it would be like to be part of it.

Do you know that you also have a story? Like all children in the world, you were born into a family in a certain place and time. God gave you gifts and abilities, as he did to every person. You are one-of-a-kind, just as all people everywhere are unique. No one's story is exactly like yours.

If you read about people in many places in the world, you might notice that their stories are different from yours. You probably have enough to eat, but they might be hungry. You might know how to read and write, but they might not be able to. You probably have time to play, but they might have to work hard most of the time in order to grow enough food to eat.

But that doesn't mean their stories can't change. They can! And they are changing because God is making old things new!

In the best storybook ever — the Bible — we see all kinds of examples of God changing people's stories. God loves his children and wants what's best for them. He is always at work in their lives. And the best part is, God's story didn't end after the Bible was written. His story is still being written in your life and in the lives of other people.

During the next few weeks, we will be learning about how God rewrote the stories of people in the Bible and how he is still rewriting stories in the lives of people around the world today.

When you listen to the stories, you can look for ways in which God makes

old things new. You can pray that all people will have enough to eat and have the chance to learn how to read and write. You can also save your money in your Peter Fish or recycled can bank to help people around the world.

PRAYER

Dear God, you make old things new! For all your gifts, we thank you. For your glory, rewrite all people's stories. In Jesus' name, amen.



GIVING SUGGESTION

How many people live in your home? Each person has a story. Put 25 cents into your bank for each one. Share stories with each other about how God has been good to you.

DAY 2

God Changes Older People's Stories

Read Abram and Sarai's story in a Storybook Bible or in Genesis 12:1-20, 16:1-6; 17:1-8, 15-17; 18:1-15; 21:1-7. For younger children, Faith Alive Resources has many Bible stories available in its "God Loves Me" book series. Look for them in your church library or at faithaliveresources.org/GodLovesMe

People who are older than us can sometimes tell us great stories about how God has worked in their life and brought about great changes from the time they were kids until today. Sometimes those changes are still happening even when people are grown up and have kids or grandkids.

Abram and Sarai are two people we read about in the Bible. They were already old when God brought about a great change in their lives. He told them to leave their country and family to go to the land that he would show them. God also promised that he would give them many children and that everyone on the earth would be blessed through them.

It was hard for Abram and Sarai to believe that these changes could happen when they were already so old. Sarai even laughed about it. But with God, all things are possible no matter how old or young we are.

Long ago, God rewrote the stories of old Abram and Sarai — he even changed their names to Abraham and Sarah. Today, he is rewriting the story of Tarciscius Irungu, a farmer who lives in Kenya, a country in Africa. Tarciscius is a grandfather and has farmed one way all his life. It was the way his parents taught him to farm and it was the way he taught his children and grandchildren. The problem was, no matter how hard Tarciscius worked, he could not grow enough food to feed his family.

God used World Renew to change Tarciscius' story. Even though he had lived a long time, Tarciscius was happy to learn how to grow crops in a different way. He tried new seeds and new techniques and is now growing more food than he ever has before.

The new way of farming means that Tarciscius has enough to eat and even has some food leftover that he can sell. He feels healthier and more energetic and his grandchildren can go to school.

God changes people's stories, no matter how old they are. The lives of Abraham and Sarah and Tarciscius and his wife prove that God is our faithful story-changer!

PRAYER

Dear God, faithful to Abraham and Sarah and Tarciscius and his wife, thanks for changing their stories and giving them a better life. In Jesus' name, amen.



GIVING SUGGESTION

Do you have any grandparents or a special older person in your life? Put 25 cents in your bank for each one and ask them to tell you a story about how God has worked in their life.

DAY 3

God Changed Moses and Anowara's Stories

Read Moses' story in a Storybook Bible or in Exodus 3:1-12

Have you ever read a story about someone who was afraid? Maybe it was about a boy who was scared to walk alone in a gloomy forest or about a girl who feared climbing a dangerous mountain by herself. Many times in stories people are afraid to do something new because they feel all alone.

Long ago, God spoke to Moses from the burning bush and told him to do something new. No longer would Moses care for his sheep. God was sending him to lead the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt.

Moses didn't like it that God was changing his story. He made many excuses for not obeying. He said he couldn't speak well enough to talk to the Israelites or Pharaoh. He didn't think he could do a good job. But God told Moses that he was the one who gave him a mouth with which to speak and God would send Moses' brother Aaron to go with him. Moses changed because he learned that he was not alone. God was with him.

Today, God is giving similar courage to people like Anowara. In Bangladesh, many women like Anowara are not allowed to go to school or have jobs. They have to depend on their fathers or husbands to support them. Sometimes, though, this system doesn't provide enough money for the family to live on.

Years ago, Anowara learned how to sew clothes, but she was afraid to start her own business. She didn't think she could do it.

God changed Anowara's story through World Renew. World Renew started a group for women in Anowara's village. In the group, Anowara learned that everyone is valuable, even girls and women. She also learned skills to help

her run a business. Through a similar men's group, Anowara's husband also learned that when men and women work together, the whole family benefits.

Through her group, Anowara gained the courage she needed to start a sewing business in her neighborhood. Now she earns enough money to support her family. She has also put her new skills to work and has trained 12 other women how they can start businesses too.

Our good God gave Moses and Anowara courage to try something new. As we think about loving and helping people in need, we can also be brave and trust that God will show us how to help and will give us gifts to share.

PRAYER

Dear God, all through history, you've changed people's stories. You guided Moses and Anowara, too. For your goodness, we praise you! In Jesus' name, amen.



GIVING SUGGESTION

Anowara's life changed by sewing clothes. How many pieces of clothes are you wearing right now? Put 10 cents into your bank for each one. Talk about how you can help to change the lives of others, both in your neighborhood and globally, by sharing your talents and abilities with others.

DAY 4

Seeking Forgiveness and Peace Changes Stories

Read Joseph's story in Genesis 37; 39-45 or in a Storybook Bible.

Imagine what it must feel like to be thrown into a deep, dark pit or sold into slavery. Now, imagine that it was your own brothers or sisters who did this to you.

That's just what happened to Joseph. Joseph's story was filled with hardship. His brothers hated him because he was their father's favorite son. They were angry, too, because Joseph seemed to brag when he told them about his special dreams.

Joseph's brothers decided to kill him. But one brother stopped them. Instead, they threw Joseph into a deep, dark pit and, later, sold him to traders who were traveling to Egypt.

In Egypt, Joseph suffered. But one day, God changed his story! Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, made Joseph a great leader who helped the country and the surrounding lands through a famine. Joseph organized many people to work together to store up food. Because of Joseph, many people's lives were spared.

God also helped Joseph forgive his brothers. When Joseph's brothers came to Egypt to buy food, they didn't recognize him. Eventually, Joseph told them who he was and forgave them. Joseph understood that God had allowed some bad things to happen to him so that many lives could be saved. Seeking forgiveness and peace changed Joseph and his brothers' stories.

When people don't forgive each other, it can cause a lot of problems. In Indonesia, for example, there are groups of people who have hated each other for many years. They have different religions and different customs and thought that that was a good enough reason to do mean things to each other. After one group hurt someone, the other would fight back by doing something even worse. It meant that

the whole community could not work at escaping poverty because they could not work together.

World Renew helped the people in these communities learn about peace. It took some time, but eventually both groups asked for forgiveness. They promised to help each other and to work together to make their communities better places to live. It was a great day!

A few weeks after that great day, however, Mr. Gabriel, the only Christian in his village, was beaten by people in his community. The news spread to other villages. Soon, there was a group of Christians who wanted to fix the situation by fighting back against Mr. Gabriel's attackers. Fortunately, three men who had attended World Renew's peace-building workshop were willing to speak up. They asked the leaders and the Christians to forgive the attackers and to maintain peace. And that's what happened!

Thank God for giving us the gift of forgiveness and peace so that stories can end happily and people can work together!

PRAYER

Dear God, help your children seek peace and forgive. Make us peace-builders and help us lovingly live! In Jesus' name, amen.



GIVING SUGGESTION

Forgiveness is a gift from God and a gift we can give each other. Talk about ways in which forgiveness is a gift. Put 10 cents in your bank for each one.

DAY 5

Providing Protection Changes Stories

Read Rahab's story in Joshua 2; 6:22-25 or in a Storybook Bible.

When a mother hen senses that danger is near, she spreads her wings over her chicks. She doesn't want her chicks to be hurt, and protects them by putting her own body in the way.

God protects his children, too. When they are in danger, he sometimes sends people to protect them. That's what happened long ago when Joshua was leading the people of Israel to the Promised Land. He sent two spies to check out the city of Jericho. While they were there, the King of Jericho found out and wanted the spies killed. They went to the house of Rahab, the innkeeper.

Rahab knew that the spies needed protection from the king of Jericho. She hid them under stalks of flax on her roof. When the king's men came to her house and asked for the men, she said they had left the city. She told them to quickly run after the men. That's what they did.

Before she helped the spies escape, Rahab asked them to save her life and the lives of her family members when they captured the city. God forever changed Rahab's story when the Israelites saved her. She became part of their nation — Jesus' family tree included Rahab!

Today, people still need protection. God is rewriting their stories by offering protection in different ways.

Johari and her three children live in Tanzania. A while ago, Johari's husband died of a virus. It was a type of sickness that people didn't really understand. When people in her community realized why he had died, they thought Johari and her children also had the virus. They didn't want to be near the family, because they worried that they might get sick as well. As a result, Johari couldn't find work and the children were

teased at school. They felt completely alone.

God protected Johari's family by changing people's attitudes. During training given by World Renew, people learned the truth about the virus. They learned what it was and how it could be prevented. They realized that they didn't need to separate themselves from people who had it. In fact, they realized that God calls us all to care for each other — especially those who are sick or in need. Soon, people weren't afraid of Johari and her children anymore.

Today, Johari's family is part of the community. She's been given a special job to work to improve the lives of girls and young women who have been mistreated. Just as God protected her through changing people's minds, she is offering protection and a new beginning to others!

PRAYER

Dear God, over your world, spread your protecting wings. We trust that you are in control of all things! In Jesus' name, amen.



GIVING SUGGESTION

Johari's husband died from a virus. In our homes, we have many ways that we can use to protect ourselves from viruses. This includes washing our hands before eating, using toilets, and eating healthy food. How many things can you think of that can help you stay healthy? Put 10 cents in your bank for each one.

WEEKEND ACTIVITY # 2

Enjoy Happy Ending Stories

In the last week, you've been learning about how God rewrote people's stories in Bible times and how He is rewriting people's stories today. Below, you'll find a list of picture books which tell stories about children in the world today. Why not check out these books from your library and enjoy a relaxing time reading happy ending stories?

You can also visit worldrenew.net/ videos and watch some World Renew stories together as a family. When you're reading or watching each one, think about this question: How were the lives of the children in each book or video changed for the better?



Mimi's Village and How Basic Health Care Transformed It by Katie Smith Milway. Illustrated by Eugenie Fernandes (Kids Can Press, 2012)

Mimi Malaho lives in a Kenyan village. When Mimi's sister, Nakkissi, becomes ill due to contaminated water, Mimi experiences the necessity of health care. Nakkissi is treated at a clinic in a neighboring village. When Mimi returns to her own village, she asks her father if he will build a clinic for their village. In time, Mimi's "big dream" becomes a reality.



My Name is Blessing by Eric Walters. Illustrated by Eugenie Fernandes (Tundra Books, 2013)

In a Kenyan village, Muthini and his eight cousins live with their grandmother — their *Nyanya* — who is their sole provider. Each of their parents have either abandoned them or died. Nyanya's given name, Mumo, means *grace*. Muthini realizes that in his culture names have meaning. Sadly, because of a deformity — Muthini has only two fingers on his right hand and none on his left — his name means *suffering*.

Muthini's name is hard for him to bear. But his life changes dramatically when Nyanya makes an unexpected decision.



Today Is the Day by Eric Walters. Illustrated by Eugenie Fernandes (Tundra Books, 2015)

Mutanu lives in an orphanage in Kenya. She and many orphans like her don't know their birth dates. Each year, the newly arrived orphans receive a birthday day, as well as a party and gifts. Mutanu is filled with joy and anticipation when the special day arrives.



In a Cloud of Dust by Alma Fullerton. Illustrated by Brian Deines (Pajama Press, Inc. 2015)

In Tanzania, Anna walks many miles to school, making it difficult for her to do her homework at the end of the day when night has come. The gift of a bike transforms Anna's life and she generously shares it with her peers.



School Days Around the World by Margriet Ruurs. Illustrated by Alice Feagan (Kids Can Press, 2015)

Fourteen students from various places in the world share details about their school and what they do there each day. Author's notes explain that many children around the world aren't able to go to school.



Eight Days: A Story of Haiti by Edwidge Danticat. Illustrated by Alix Delinois. (Orchard Books, 2010)

In this fictional picture book based on the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Junior is trapped beneath the rubble. He keeps his hope alive by imagining flying

DAY 6

God Answers Questions and Changes Stories

Read Gideon's story in Judges 6-8 or in a Storybook Bible.

When you were learning to talk, you probably began to ask questions. You might have asked, "Why is the moon round? How does the wind blow? Where do the stars go in the morning?" At some point, questions are a part of everyone's story.

In the Bible, we read about Gideon. He also asked questions. His people, the Israelites, had turned away from God and were being attacked by the Midianites. They cried out to God.

God answered by sending an angel to Gideon to tell him that God was with them.

Gideon didn't understand so he asked, "If the Lord is with us, why has all this happened to us?"

Gideon was frightened. He was also confused when the Lord told him to save Israel from the Midianites. He wondered how he could help when he was so young and came from the weakest clan of Israel.

God's answer is the best answer we could ever receive for any of our questions. He said, "I will be with you" (Judges 6:16a).

Today, people all over the world still ask questions. In Senegal, young Ami Diop must have had many questions about her future. When she was still a young girl, her father told her he had arranged her marriage to an older man. Ami was afraid of her father. She had no choice, but to obey.

Ami cried constantly. God heard her cries. He understood her questions. He was with her when she moved in with her in-laws' family and, later, when she fled back to her parents' home.

Ami's father was angry with her, and she became ill with worry. What would happen to her now?

God knew the answer to Ami's questions. He was with her. Ami heard about a program run by World Renew which teaches young people about health and their rights. The teens were encouraged to share what they learned with their parents, and Ami did. Her father realized that all people have rights and early marriage is not good for young girls.

God answered Ami's questions and changed her story, as he changed Gideon's story. Ami and her father love and respect each other now, and he pays for her education.

God was with Gideon and Ami and He is with you today too. When you have a problem that seems too big for you to handle, take it to God and ask Him to help. He will always listen.

PRAYER

Dear God, when you answer our questions, you show your care. Answer the questions of people everywhere! In Jesus' name, amen.



GIVING SUGGESTION

In many parts of the world, young girls get married and have babies while they are still teenagers. Find out how old your mother was when you were born and put five cents in your bank for each year.

DAY 7

God Creates People and Shapes Their Stories

Read Hannah's story in 1 Samuel 1:1-2:11 or in a Storybook Bible.

Chances are that somewhere in your home there are baby pictures. These photos might be in a frame, inside an album, or on your computer and show what you and your parents looked like right after you were born, and when you began to crawl and walk. If you were adopted, your baby picture might have been the first way that your parents saw what you looked like.

Our baby pictures tell us stories about ourselves. Usually, the pictures are of happy times that our parents wanted to share with us when we grew up. Sometimes, though, baby pictures can remind us of sad times. Some people want to have children, but can't. Other people have children, but don't have enough food to feed them or medicine to give them when they're sick. Sometimes parents even see their children die.

Hannah was sad because she didn't have children. When Hannah lived, the people of Israel believed that being able to have children showed that God cared for you. If you couldn't have children then they believed that God didn't love you. While we know that that isn't true, it was something that made Hannah very sad.

Hannah cried out to God and made a promise to him. She said that if God would give her a child, she would give the child back to God to serve him from then on. God heard Hannah's prayer and changed her story by giving her baby Samuel.

Hannah was true to her word and gave Samuel back to the Lord to serve him. God used Samuel to be a prophet to the people of Israel. God created Samuel and shaped his story.

Today, in Bangladesh, many pregnant women go through hard times because they don't receive the care that they

need to deliver babies and keep them healthy after they are born. But with the help of World Renew, God is changing these stories!

When Jakia Sultana was pregnant, she joined a group of women and learned how to stay healthy and to care for a baby. She received regular checkups at a clinic. When Jakia had a problem in her pregnancy, a health worker sent her to a health center and, later, to a hospital.

Jakia's baby was born too early. He was very small and had problems. Jakia's health worker stayed by her and made sure that the baby was taken care of. Jakia was so happy because her baby survived and grew strong.

Jakia wants other people in her community to know the good news that learning about health care for pregnant women and infants can save the lives of mothers and newborn babies.

God changed Hannah's story by giving her a son. He changed Jakia's story by providing people who could care for her and her baby. Our God is so great and mighty, yet he stoops down to care about babies!

PRAYER

Dear God, babies are a gift from you. Let each one be loved and cared for, too. In Jesus' name, amen.



GIVING SUGGESTION

How many babies do you know? Put 25 cents in your bank for each one. Talk about ways in which God cares for the babies that you know.

DAY 8

God Changes Young People's Stories

Read Esther's story in Esther 1-10 or in a Storybook Bible.

Do you ever wish you were grown up? Sometimes children think that life will be more exciting and adventurous when they are older. The truth is that children, no matter their age, matter to God. He allows children and young people to serve Him in ordinary and special ways.

Esther was a young Jewish girl who grew up in a dangerous time. When King Xerxes, the Persian ruler, was looking for a new wife, he chose Esther to be his queen because she was very beautiful. Esther didn't tell anyone that she was Jewish.

Soon after, Esther's cousin Mordecai discovered that one of the king's men was trying to get the king to kill all of the Jews. Mordecai sent word to Esther to tell her about the evil man's plans and to ask for her help. He wanted Esther to understand that God had placed her in King Xerxes' palace for that specific time when the Jews needed someone to rescue them.

God changed the Jewish people's story through Esther's obedience. In all the years since then, she has been an example of a young person who understood that God had a job for her to do, and then did it.

In Laos today, God is using World Renew to help children become an example to their community about how to live healthier lives. World Renew's health and education teams went to two village schools to teach students and teachers about the importance of washing their bodies, eating healthy food, keeping the school and village clean, and having toilets. In the past, many villagers did not know that diseases could be spread when these things weren't taken care of.

Later, the World Renew teams went back to the schools to see if the students and teachers had made any

changes. They had! One good change was a hand washing station they had built themselves. Also, they were boiling their water before drinking it in order to kill germs. They were also washing their hands before eating, and becoming healthier so they didn't miss as many days of school. And they had made a garbage pit, so the school was cleaner.

The changes didn't just happen at the school. The children told their parents about what they had learned. Then their parents wanted to change, too, so that their family and village life would be healthier.

Even though you are young like Esther and the children in Laos, God cares for you. He will allow you to serve him in ordinary and special ways. In what ways can you serve God in your family, city, and world?

PRAYER

Dear God, as children, we ask you to show us a task. What can we do to serve others and you? In Jesus' name, amen.



GIVING SUGGESTION

Often, we first learn to serve God in our homes. Talk about the ways you and your parents serve God in your home. Put 25 cents in your bank for each one.

DAY 9

God Changes Stories by Teaching New Ways

Read Peter's story in Luke 5:1-11 or in a Storybook Bible.

Right now, you may be learning something new. Maybe you are learning how to swim, read and write, or ride a bike. God gives us many opportunities to learn every day and what we learn becomes part of our story.

We learn for our whole lives, but sometimes people get used to doing things the same way over and over again. They don't want to change.

One day, as Jesus was teaching the people, he got into a boat because they were crowding around him. He asked Simon, the owner of the boat, to row out a ways so he could teach the people.

Simon was a fisherman. When Jesus had finished teaching, he asked Simon to take the boat out into deep water and put down his nets. Simon didn't want to be rude to Jesus, but he must have thought that Jesus didn't know much about fishing. After all, it was day time, not a good time for fishing. Besides, Simon and the other fishermen had been out fishing all night and hadn't caught anything.

Simon could have said no to Jesus, but instead he agreed to learn from Jesus.

When he and the other fishermen cast their nets, they caught so many fish that the nets began to break. They had to call for help from other fishermen.

Simon knew then that Jesus was the Lord. Jesus called Simon to follow him and learn a new way of doing things. Jesus changed Simon Peter's story and made him a fisher of people. Because he was willing to learn from Jesus, Simon became someone who could tell other people about God's love.

The same thing still happens today. Sometimes people don't want to learn new ways of doing things, but when they do, their lives are often improved.

In Guatemala, for example, Domingo Lopez had never gone to school. He didn't know how to read and write. His family was poor because their soil wasn't fertile. They had a hard time growing any food.

World Renew invited Domingo to learn new ways of farming that would make the soil richer and help him grow more food. They also offered to teach him how to read and write. Domingo thought he already knew everything he needed to know about farming and that he was too old to learn new things. But he changed his mind.

Domingo studied hard to learn how to read and write, and to learn new ways of farming. Now he can do both. He is able to grow enough food to feed his family and earns enough extra money to send his children to school. Also, Domingo has built a stronger home made out of cement blocks and with a tin roof for his family.

God changed both Simon Peter and Domingo's stories by teaching them new ways. He is always patient and helps us when it's hard to learn new things.

PRAYER

Dear God, You bless each as we learn what you teach. You change our ways and bless our days. In Jesus' name, amen.



GIVING SUGGESTION

God blessed Simon Peter and Domingo when they learned new ways of doing things. Talk about what you would like to learn about God's amazing world. Put 25 cents into your bank for each one.

DAY 10

God's Truth and Justice Change Stories

Read Zacchaeus' story in Luke 19:1-10 or in a Storybook Bible.

When someone cuts in front of us in line or takes our toy and doesn't get in trouble for it, we don't like it. We might want to scream out, "It's not fair!" Being treated unfairly makes us feel sad, hurt, and sometimes angry.

Long ago, a Jewish man named Zacchaeus worked as a chief tax collector for the Romans, who were enemies of his people. He became very rich because he treated his own people unfairly and made them pay more money to the Roman government than they were supposed to. Then he kept most of the money for himself.

Often when we picture Zacchaeus, we see a short man who climbed up into a sycamore-fig tree to see Jesus over the crowds. But when Jesus looked at Zacchaeus, he saw a person who needed a Savior.

Zacchaeus must have been surprised when Jesus said that he was coming to his house that day. Jesus did much more than just visit Zacchaeus and his family. He changed Zacchaeus's story. Zacchaeus understood that if he was going to follow Jesus, he would need to stop loving money and riches, and show his love for Jesus by treating people fairly. Zacchaeus promised Jesus that he would give half of what he owned to poor people. He also said that he would pay back money to people he had cheated.

Many people in the world today are still being treated unfairly. Some of them are beginning to speak up and say, "That's not fair!"

In Nigeria, for example, some young people have had to drop out of school because their parents don't have enough money. They have trouble finding jobs because employers think they are too young, too uneducated, or

too poor to be hired. Sometimes, bad people approach these young people and offer them money to do bad things.

World Renew is helping some of these same boys and girls learn how to make good choices and how to say no when someone wanted them to do something bad. They are teaching them skills to use to get a job or start a business. They also showed girls ways to help their parents understand that girls should be allowed to go to school, just like boys do.

While being taught, the teens wore special T-shirts that said, "Act Justly! Promote Adolescent Health and Rights." People in the community wondered what those words meant. The teens explained that they meant that all people should be treated equally and fairly, no matter how old they are or what type of family they are from. All people should be treated in helpful, not harmful ways. God used World Renew to rewrite these teens' stories as they learned that they have rights and that they may expect to be treated fairly, just as they should be fair to everyone else.

PRAYER

Dear God, you love what is just and right. Help us love others and walk in your light. In Jesus' name, amen.



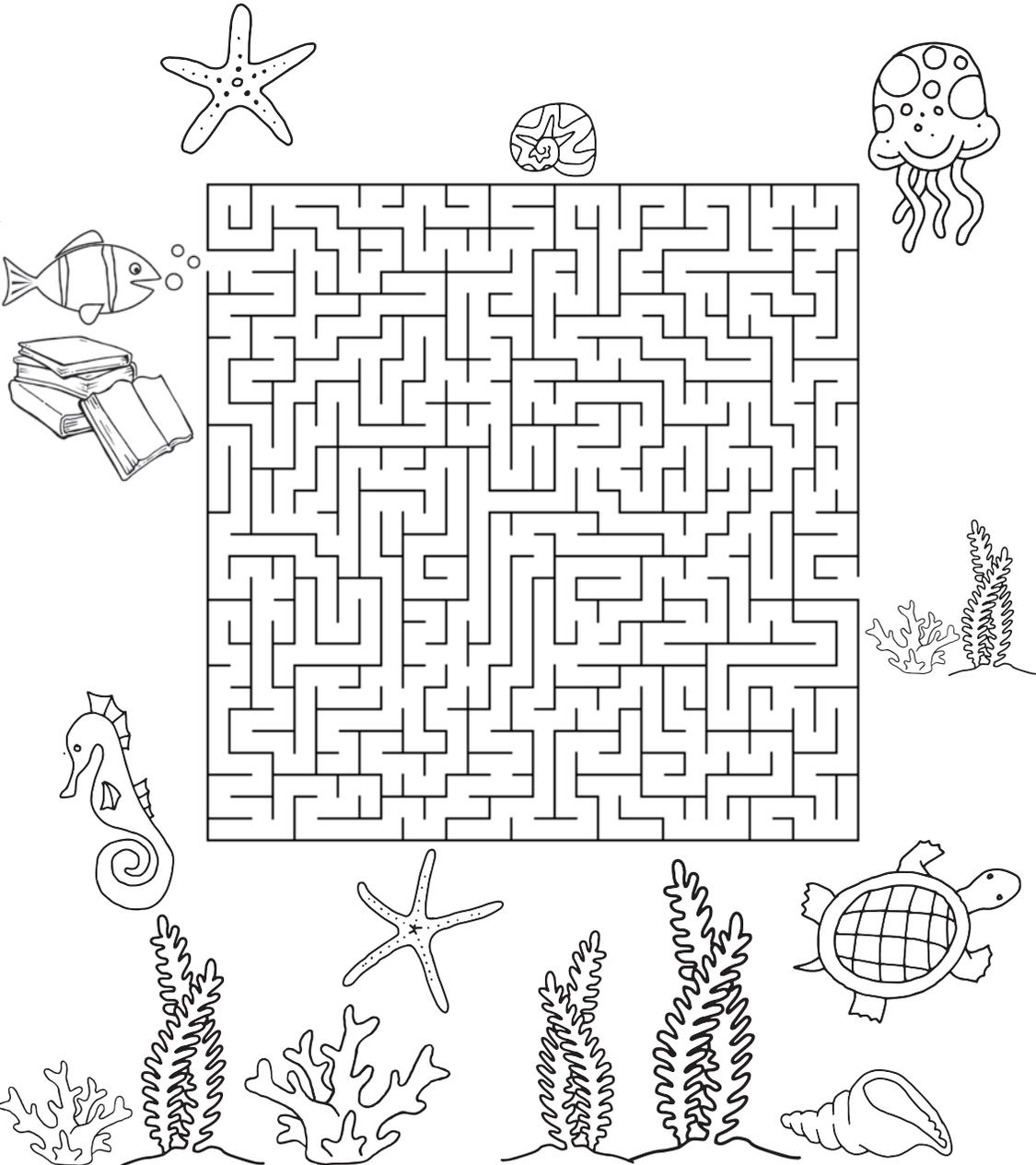
GIVING SUGGESTION

The young people in Nigeria from our story love going to school, but many can't afford it. Count how many years each member of your family has gone to school. Put 10 cents in your bank for each one.

WEEKEND ACTIVITY # 3

Peter Fish Maze

Peter fish has been reading stories at the library. Help Peter find his way home.



DAY 11

God Writes Happy Endings and New Beginnings

Read Dorcas' story in Acts 9:36-42 or in a Storybook Bible.

Most of us like stories with happy endings and new beginnings. When we read about someone who is sad, we usually want them to find a way to be happy. When we read about someone who is in trouble, we want them to get help.

Dorcas had a happy story. She was a disciple of Jesus who understood that he wanted her to follow his example. Jesus had shown that he cared for hungry people when he multiplied the bread and fish, and fed thousands. Dorcas showed her love for Jesus by always doing good deeds and helping people who were poor.

One day, Dorcas became sick and died. Many of the widows whom Dorcas had helped were very sad. They thought Dorcas' earthly story had ended. They lovingly prepared her body for burial.

But God had a happy, surprise ending in store for Dorcas' story. Dorcas' friends invited Peter, Jesus' disciple, to come. When he arrived, the people that Dorcas had helped cried as they showed him the clothing that Dorcas had made for them.

Peter sent everyone out of the room. Then he prayed. He asked Jesus to help and he commanded the dead woman to get up. Instantly, Dorcas was alive again! All the widows and other believers were amazed.

Hosnara, a 12-year-old girl from Bangladesh, reminds me of Dorcas. Hosnara lives in a poor community where many people can't get help from a doctor when they are sick. Hosnara cares about poor and sick people, just as Dorcas did, but she didn't think that she was important enough to help her community.

Hosnara changed her thinking when she attended a workshop for teens led by World Renew. She learned about

ways to stay healthy, the importance of being treated fairly, and ways to protect herself from being mistreated. It sparked something new in Hosnara.

She began to dream of becoming a medical doctor. Hosnara already knew that poor families in her community don't get good health care because it costs a lot of money and they can't afford to pay for it. She also knew that being both poor and sick can mean that poor people become even poorer because they can no longer work to earn money to live. Now, Hosnara has a plan to one day teach poor people ways to stay healthy and help them when they become sick.

In Bangladesh, many parents don't think it is important for their daughters to go to school, but Hosnara's parents understand her dream and want to support her. They support Hosnara going to school so that she can help others.

God is powerful and kind! He changed Dorcas' story by writing a happy ending. And he changed Hosnara's story by writing a new beginning.

PRAYER

Dear God, you are compassionate and loving, too. Make us like you! In Jesus' name, amen.



GIVING SUGGESTION

Hosnara dreams of becoming a doctor because many people in her community can't afford to go to one. How many times have you been to a doctor or dentist in the past year? Put 25 cents in your bank for each visit.

DAY 12

God Rewrites Stories by Changing People's Hearts

Read Saul's story in Acts 9:1-30 or in a Storybook Bible.

Have you ever read a story about someone who is very mean and hurts other people? Maybe the story helped you to understand why the person acted that way. And maybe the story showed how the person finally realized that what they were doing was wrong and that they needed to change. That's usually when a sad story becomes a whole lot happier.

Today's Bible story is a little bit like that. Saul hated Jesus' followers. He was very mean to them. He tried to capture them and have them put in prison. He even thought it was all right that Stephen, who loved and followed Jesus, was killed by people who hated Jesus.

Saul seems like a pretty bad guy, but God had plans to rewrite Saul's story. One day, as Saul was on his way to Damascus to arrest Christians, suddenly a bright light from heaven surrounded him. Saul was terrified and fell to the ground. He heard a voice say, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4)

Saul asked, "Who are you, Lord?" (Acts 9:5)

The voice replied, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do" (Acts 9:6).

Saul, now blind, was led away. A few days later, he was given back his sight. God also gave him the gift of salvation and a new job to do. From then on, Saul was known as Paul. He became a missionary and a great follower of Jesus.

God still changes our lives like that today. Even people that we think are pretty bad can become people that God uses for his work. In Mali, for example, there was a man who did not treat his family very well. He went to church without his wife, he didn't ask

her opinion when he made decisions for his family, and he even took all of the family's money and used it for the things he wanted instead of things the family needed.

One day, World Renew came to talk with the people at his church. They explained how important it is for everyone to work together if they want to make life better. They trained parents to have better relationships with their children, and they trained married couples to treat each other with respect as partners in their family.

After learning from World Renew, this man spoke up and told everyone that he had made many mistakes as a husband. He was ready to change. Now, he and his wife work together in their marriage. They both come to church and help out in many different programs.

God is so wise and powerful he can rewrite any one's story, including ours!

PRAYER

Dear God, You change our hearts! Help us to do our part to love and care, and always share. In Jesus' name, amen.



GIVING SUGGESTION

Think of kind actions you can take to make someone's life better. Put 10 cents in your bank for each one. Choose one action you thought of and do it.

DAY 13

God Changes Stories by Giving Gifts

Read the story of the healed leper in Luke 17:11-19 or in a Storybook Bible.

Presents are such fun things. First comes the excitement of seeing a present all wrapped up in shiny paper or a special gift bag. It is fun to guess what's inside. Next, comes the fun part of opening the present and playing with the gift.

But there is a third important part that comes with every present. Do you know what it is? After opening the gift, it is always important to thank the person who gave it to you. The giver of the gift is more important than the gift itself. Learning to say thank you when we are young helps us to keep on saying thank you when we are older. Being thankful becomes a part of our story.

Jesus met someone who knew how to say thank you. There were ten men who had a bad disease called leprosy. One day, these men saw Jesus, but they didn't come close to him. They were used to being told to stay away from people because of their disease. Instead of coming close, they yelled out to Jesus and begged him to be kind to them.

Jesus called out to them to go to the priests to show them that they were healed. As they obeyed Jesus' command, they were cured. They would no longer have to keep themselves apart from other people.

One of the men saw that he was healed and ran back to Jesus. He praised God and fell at Jesus' feet to thank him.

God changed that leper's story by giving him the gifts of healing and faith, and the healed man thanked the Giver of the gift.

In South Sudan today, people are very poor because their country has suffered in a terrible war that has lasted many years. Many people had to stay away from their homes and farms for a long time. Today, they are back on their farms but are very poor and don't have

the tools or skills needed to make their farms profitable.

Edna Doruba is one of these farmers. Even though she was hurt in the war and is now poor, she continues to thank God. She knows that it's important to say thank you for the good things that God has given her. She also knows that God the Giver is more important than any gift she has received.

World Renew's farming program is one gift that Edna has received from God. World Renew is helping farmers like Edna get started on their farms again, teaching them new ways of farming and giving them seeds and tools.

Already, Edna is growing more food.

Edna doesn't keep her thanksgiving to God to herself. She talks to her friends and neighbors and tells them about how important it is to praise God more and more every day for all he is doing for them.

God changed both the leper and Edna's stories when he gave them gifts. And both of them said thank you to God, the Giver of all good gifts!

How can you thank God for all his gifts to you?

PRAYER

Dear God, Your gifts are always good — for faith, health, family, and food, we thank you. In Jesus' name, amen.



GIVING SUGGESTION

Food is one of the great gifts that God has given us. Look in your cupboards and count every can or box of food that you find. Put 10 cents into your bank for each one.

DAY 14

God Changes Stories by Meeting People Where They Live

Read Lydia's story in Acts 16:11-15 or in a Storybook Bible.

God meets you right where you live. It doesn't matter whether you are old or young, rich or poor, or healthy or sick. God is with us all the time as he writes the stories of our lives.

Long ago, God met Lydia by a river in Philippi. Lydia was a business woman who earned money by selling purple cloth, which many people wanted to buy. Lydia had heard about God, but she hadn't heard about Jesus being God's Son who had come to save people from their sins. God sent the apostle Paul to meet Lydia and some other women by a river. When Paul began to preach, God opened Lydia's heart and he changed her story.

After Lydia and the members of her household were baptized, she invited Paul and the people he was traveling with to come to her home. She wanted to show her thanks to God by opening her home to other Christians.

In Honduras, God met Alba Leticia Matamoros by sending World Renew to train her in the best ways to grow a garden and to harvest her own vegetables to feed her five children. Now she is able to save money because she doesn't have to buy all her food from the market anymore.

Alba also learned how to raise chickens. To help her get started, World Renew gave Alba 15 chicks. She fed them special feed that helped them grow healthy and large. Today, she has many grown chickens. She uses some for meat for her family to eat. The rest, she sells for a profit so that she can buy the things her family needs.

After meeting God through World Renew's trainings, Alba's story has changed. She has gone from thinking of herself as poor and helpless, to become

a leader in her community. She helps other women learn to grow vegetables that they can sell at the market. She also works with other community leaders to create plans and carry out work that makes her village a better place.

God sent Paul to meet Lydia by the river. And he sent World Renew to meet Alba in her village in Honduras. Thank God that he always meets us where we live!

PRAYER

Dear God, you always meet us where we are. No place is too far. Your love and care are near. Thanks that we don't need to fear. In Jesus' name, amen.



GIVING SUGGESTION

In the last three weeks, you've read stories in this devotional about God meeting people from places all over the world. Look back through the stories and make a list of the countries that you've read about. Put 10 cents into your bank for each one.

DAY 15

Jesus' Story Changes Everything

Read Jesus' story in Luke 4:14-21 or in a Storybook Bible.

Over the past few weeks, we've heard lots of stories about people in the Bible and people in our world today, but do you know what the greatest story of all is? I'll give you a hint. You've probably celebrated part of this story with your family, or at church, or school during Christmas. Yes, the greatest story of all is Jesus' story.

Christmas is the time we celebrate that Jesus came into the world. He was born like every other baby. But the difference between Jesus' birth and that of all other children is that Jesus' story didn't begin on the day he was born. Jesus' story has no beginning. He is God's Son and has always existed. God sent Jesus to become one of us because God knew we needed his help to forever change our stories. After Adam and Eve sinned, God promised that he would send us a Saviour.

When Jesus came to earth, he taught that he was bringing God's kingdom. He was showing that God wanted to make all things new. Jesus died on the cross and rose from death. He made a way for us to be friends with God again. But he did more than that. He showed that he is King of a kingdom where the good news is preached, blind people receive their sight, the lame walk, those who are sick are healed, prisoners are set free, the deaf hear, and the dead are raised.

You are part of God's kingdom story and so is World Renew. In the past three weeks, you've heard about how God is continuing to change people's stories today. Through God's good grace, people who were poor are now earning more money, farmers who were hungry are now growing enough food for their families, young people who were school dropouts now have hope for the future, and people who were fighting with each other have found ways to live in peace.

The gifts you have given to your banks over the past three weeks will help World Renew continue to work with people in need to help them as God changes their stories. Thank you for making giving part of your story. And thank God for King Jesus who makes it possible for all of us to change our stories for the better!

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, for us, You left Your home in heaven above. Thanks for Your love! Thanks that You care for all people everywhere! In Jesus' name, amen.



GIVING SUGGESTION

Jesus changed the world in many ways. Talk about some of the ways that he did that. Put 10 cents in your bank for each one.

WEEKEND ACTIVITY # 3

Thank God for Changing Stories

In the last three weeks, you've learned about how God has rewritten the stories of people in the world with the help of World Renew. Isn't it amazing what God has done?

Now it's time to celebrate and say, "Thank you, God!"

Throw a party and invite family and friends to join you in thanking God for changing your story and the stories of all the people you've read about. Ask your mom or dad, or another adult to help you bake a cake. Add 13 small candles to remember the stories of the people you read about in this booklet.

Then put a larger candle in the middle of the cake to remember Jesus' story.

After the candles are lit, pray for each person mentioned in the devotional

(if you've written their names on your placemat for your bank, they'll be handy for you to read.) Blow out the candles and share the cake.

We bring joy to God's heart when we spend time remembering and thanking Him for his goodness.

As a next step as a family, you can also consider joining World Renew's Free A Family® program. By giving a gift every month, you will be helping World Renew work with families in need all year long. You'll also receive stories from World Renew's ministry that you can read and discuss as a family. Learn more at worldrenew.net/freefamily or call 1-800-730-3490 (Canada) or 1-800-552-7972 (US).



DAY 10

King of Glory — Lord of the Story!

REVELATION 21:1-5

Have you ever read a good book and felt impatient to discover the ending? Did you then peek at the last pages, keen to learn about the plot's resolution, and what happens to the protagonist, who you have come to care about? In the last two weeks, you have been reading stories about how Jesus, the Story-Changer, is allowing and empowering World Renew to participate in rewriting people's stories around the world. It's an ongoing story. Each day, new chapters are being written as the Holy Spirit moves throughout the world, conveying the good news of King Jesus' victory and the establishment of his kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven. People who were once impoverished are earning a secure income. Farmers are learning new methods for enriching their soil and planting their crops so that they are able to grow enough food to feed their families and to sell the surplus. Women who have suffered from unjust treatment are becoming business leaders and contributing to their families' incomes. People who were once illiterate are learning to read and have an opportunity to read the Bible. These are all stories worthy of celebration, but they are only part of a larger story. The story of God's great work and His Kingdom is ongoing. The book of Revelation gives us a glimpse of how this story will end. In his vision, John saw a new heaven and a new earth, where God's dwelling place was among the people. In this new world, there will be no more tears, death, or pain (Revelations 21:3-4).

John's vision isn't a pie-in-the-sky mirage, nor is it a pot-shot at a dream that might possibly come true if we all work hard enough. Instead, it is a vision that we know will come true and one that we are tasked to play a role in today. We've peeked at the ending of the story and heard the words of the Word made flesh — not death, but life; not hunger, but plenty; not pain, but health; not mourning, but rejoicing. These words continue to shape our stories from beginning to end, to beginning. World Renew is thankful to God for letting us have a peek at the ending of the story. We have courage, stamina, and hope to continue participating in helping others to change their stories because the King of glory is Lord of the story!

No One is Too Small to Change the Story

DAY 9

ADULT DEVOTIONAL

At times in our lives, we all feel small. As a child, you may have felt tiny compared to a tall adult. As a teenager, maybe you shrivelled emotionally because your peers were “cooler” and more popular than you were. Even as an adult, you may find yourself feeling inferior beside someone in your work place or church community. One aspect of our sinful human nature is our constant desire to compare ourselves to others. All too often, we use this comparison to put ourselves down. Fortunately, our God is One who loves us all equally as his children. While he was on earth, Jesus was never too busy for people who were seemingly small and insignificant. The disciples learned that truth the hard way.

When people brought their babies to Jesus to place his hands on them for a blessing, the disciples saw not an opportunity for their Master to share his love, but an annoying interruption to what they considered his more important agenda. The excited parents deserved to be rebuked! Harsh words must have been hurled as the disciples attempted to send the nuisance crowd away.

Jesus would have none of it! Above the reproaching voices of the disciples, Jesus called out, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” (Luke 18:15-17).

The disciples should have known that Jesus never shunned smallness. Hadn’t he come to earth as a baby — tiny, vulnerable, and powerless? Hadn’t he repeatedly shown compassion for people on the margins of society — the poor, hungry, rejected, and isolated? Hadn’t he stooped down to show **them** love? Recognizing the worth and value of every person — no matter how small

LUKE 18:15-17

or “insignificant” — is an important value of World Renew’s ministry. In fact, it is often the starting place for communities in need.

Like us, many of these people have spent years comparing themselves to others and finding that they come up short. They know they are poor and begin to expect that that is all they can ever be. World Renew starts by reminding people that they have worth and value to God. While small and insignificant in the eyes of the world, God has given everyone gifts and abilities. Once people recognize these assets that they have at their disposal they are equipped to bring about change.

In Faulonga village in Uganda, people believed that poverty was their destiny. World Renew helped them recognize that by working together and saving as little as a few cents each week, they had the abilities to overcome poverty without external funding.

After saving money and taking out a loan from her community savings group, one woman in Faulonga was successfully able to start a business and turn a profit. She said, “We believed we were poor, but we are not. Any poverty here is just due to poor planning. We thought that banking is for the rich and civil servants, yet saving is possible within the communities. Now that we know how to plan and work together with the little that we have, we have quick access to our own financial and credit services.”

Thank God! Jesus loves all people, regardless of how small they are in their own minds or in the eyes of the world.

DAY 8

Jesus Tells a Story to Show the Way

LUKE 10:25-37

When we listen to a great story-teller, we are swiftly drawn into their story-world. We get caught up in a mystery plot's suspense, a comedy's unexpected humor, or a tragedy's heartbreaking conclusion.

When Jesus told stories, his intention was to use these parables to reveal the truth of the coming kingdom of God in such a way that listeners would have to think about God's claim on their lives and their response to him, a response that would have eternal consequences.

One day, Jesus told a parable to a law expert who approached him and asked what he had to do to inherit eternal life. If he had to love God and his neighbor, he wanted to know exactly who his neighbor was. Jesus told a story to show the man what living for God and other people is really all about!

As the expert in the law was drawn in by Jesus' story, he might have first appreciated the plot of the Good Samaritan. It would have made sense to him that the priest and Levite passed by the man because contact with the man's blood would have made them ritually unclean, something pious Jews tried to avoid.

The law expert would probably have grown increasingly uncomfortable when Jesus placed the Samaritan at center stage of the story. How could Jesus give the Samaritan the leading role of savior to the wounded man, he might have asked.

Jesus' question back was even more significant, "Which of these do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?"

When the expert in the law answered — "The one who had mercy on him" — did he really understand how Jesus had turned the tables on his original question? Jesus didn't delineating a list of people for the man to love, instead, his focus was on being a neighbor.

Today, Jesus' question still reverberates in our lives. When you think of helping people to change their stories, are you selective about which people you want to help? Are you less likely to help the Muslim in need, the homeless teenager on the street, or the person suffering from AIDS than a Christian family or child overseas? Jesus tells us that our only concern should be to be a neighbor. It is our responsibility to show mercy where it is needed, and to trust that Jesus will direct our paths to intersect with the people who he has chosen us to meet.

DAY 7

Thank Jesus for Good News Stories

LUKE 13:10-17

We bring joy to Jesus' heart when we thank him for all his good news stories. When Jesus entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and encountered a disabled woman, he set in motion a good news story that we can still thank him for today.

When Jesus saw the woman's physical and spiritual anguish, he called her to come to him, and said to her, "Woman, you are set free from your infirmity" (Luke 13:12). Then he put his hands on her. She immediately straightened up and stood tall and praised God for her deliverance.

However, where the woman experienced good news, the synagogue ruler pegged Jesus as bad news. He indignantly pointed out to the people who were present that for six days a week they could come to the synagogue for healing. They didn't need to come for healing on the Sabbath!

Angered at the synagogue ruler's hard heart and inability to see the good news story unfolding right in front of him, Jesus exposed his hypocrisy. He pointed to the very Scriptures that the synagogue ruler held dear, zeroing in on God's original intention for Sabbath rest: freedom from bondage, renewal for the journey, and communal worship of Almighty God.

Jesus' good news experienced by the healed woman and many others in the gospel narratives continues today. Matou Karambe's story is a great example. The 35-year-old woman recently joined a microcredit program in her community in Mali. This was a huge step in a society where most women are less educated than men and are expected to rely on men to support them.

Matou has seen her entire life transformed through this opportunity. The mother of four children had never attempted to earn her own income. When she joined the microcredit program, the other women encouraged her to set up her own small business. After receiving the necessary training, Matou decided to sell fried fish.

After successfully paying off her first loan, Matou decided to use some of her profits and a second small loan to invest in other business opportunities. She bought bread to sell at the market, and from the profits she purchased second-hand clothes which she sold. The diversification strategy she employed led to greater financial security and increased income.

Matou is a successful business woman because she dared to buck societal norms and try something very new and different. As a result, she is now able to send her children to school and contribute to her household expenses along with her husband. Her contribution gained her husband's respect and there is now a greater sense of partnership in their relationship.

Matou is thankful to World Renew for walking alongside her and World Renew is thankful to God for bringing this amazing change to Matou's life. What examples of good news stories do you see unfolding in your life today?

DAY 6

Changing the Stories We Tell Ourselves

JOHN 9

all these people when they don't seem to be helping themselves? Why should I

donate money when it won't really make a difference?

Throughout his ministry, Jesus' questions always went right to the

heart of people's need for His grace, love, forgiveness, and restoration. As we

follow his example, our questions can do the same.

By God's grace, we'll discard our blind misconceptions and begin asking

questions with kindness-*insight*: How does my lifestyle contribute to the

oppression of others? What can I do to better understand the reasons why

people are poor and hungry? What is God calling me to do to be part of the

solution to global issues? How does my story need to change so the stories of others will flourish?

Why are people poor? Some people might respond to this question by

saying that poor people are lazy. They don't care about education. They are

alcoholics and drug abusers. They don't want to work and prefer handouts.

While these stereotypes are likely far from the truth, they have become

part of our culture and shape how we think about people and our responses

to them. If we want to participate in helping people change their stories,

we first have to make sure that our preconceptions about their current

stories are accurate.

One day, Jesus' disciples came upon a man who had been blind from birth.

The disciples looked at the man but didn't really see him. He was a problem

to be solved and a question that needed to be answered. The disciples asked

Jesus, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

(John 9:2)

Jesus, on the other hand, looked at the man and truly saw him. He was a

person who needed Jesus. The man's blindness and the miracle of his sight

were not a result of his or his parents' sin but had happened so that God's works

would be evidenced through Jesus. What context shapes the questions

you ask? Have you ever asked: Why don't poor people work harder? Why

can't hungry people find jobs or be more entrepreneurial to earn more

income? Why do poor parents have so many children when they can't afford to

feed the ones they already have? Why don't poor parents just build a school,

hire some teachers, and educate their children? Why should I bother helping

DAY 5

Watch How Our Stories Grow

MARK 9:30-37

Today, God's work in the world continues. At times, results are quickly evident. More often, change comes slowly. For the past 37 years, World Renew has spearheaded a world hunger campaign to help North American Christians respond to needs around the world. For more than 54 years, World Renew and other global aid organizations have worked hard to improve the lives of impoverished people. Despite all this work, there are still places of great need.

In India, for example, Bashingandi Kharshandi is a small-scale farmer who lives with his wife and children on a one acre plot where he cultivates rice and vegetables. In the past, he didn't have much difficulty surviving, but now changing weather patterns as well as increasing soil infertility have made it difficult to meet his family's basic needs. Bashingandi was receptive to World Renew's offer to help him change his story. With other farmers, he patiently took small steps to learn about ways to improve his farming and increase his crop yields. Bashingandi knows he's just in the initial stage of improving his life, but that's all right with him. He understands that often change comes slowly. The vision of a better future spurs him on.

At what pace do you expect your own and other people's stories to change? Are you willing to patiently persevere and cling to God's vision for his kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven even as you work for transformation? Will you join World Renew in continuing to faithfully seek change in the world?

After a farmer plants a field of soybeans, he or she does not just sit down at the side of the field to wait for the seeds to germinate. Planting is just the beginning of the growth process. The crop also requires feeding, watering, and weeding. To get a good harvest, a farmer must have patience, perseverance, and a vision for a good outcome.

That's also how people's stories are transformed through the power of Jesus, the Story-Changer. When Jesus called twelve men to follow him, he patiently cultivated, planted, watered, and weeded the story-soil of their lives. The twelve had a lot to learn. Once, Jesus told his disciples that he would be given into the hands of evil men, who would kill him. He also explained that after three days he would rise, but the disciples didn't understand what he meant. Even though they had been with Jesus and knew who he was, they were afraid to ask him. Their understanding of his Messianic mission needed time to grow under his patient tutelage.

Another time, Jesus patiently confronted them about an argument they had out of his hearing as they travelled on the road. Ashamed, they kept quiet, not wanting their pride and selfishness exposed. They didn't comprehend that Jesus already knew they were arguing about who among them was the greatest. Jesus patiently taught them that being His follower entailed being a servant, not dominating others.

Thank God that Jesus doesn't plant kingdom seeds in people's lives and then walk away. Through his patience and perseverance, he slowly fashioned them into men who would be used by God to shape the world for him.

DAY 4

Jesus' Love Writes Surprise Endings to Our Stories

LUKE 7:36-50

Sometimes when we read or hear a story, we expect it to end one way, only to be surprised when it ends completely differently. Simon, the Pharisee, experienced a similarly shocking surprise the day he invited Jesus to his home for dinner.

Simon had planned his dinner party. His guest list did not include a woman who had lived a sinful life, but there she was for all the other guests to see, standing by the low couch on which Jesus was reclining. She wept so much that her tears wet his feet. Then she wiped his feet dry with her hair and kissed them. Pouring expensive perfume on Jesus' feet completed her act of adoration and gratitude.

When Simon witnessed this unexpected and disconcerting scene, he figured he had the ammunition against Jesus that he was hoping to uncover. If Jesus were a true prophet, he would know that the woman who was touching him was a sinner. Because Simon disdained the woman, he was convinced that her past sins determined the ending of her story. Simon's imagination failed to grasp the possibility of a surprise ending.

Jesus knew differently. He told Simon a parable about two men who both owed money that they couldn't pay back. In response to this situation, the moneylender cancelled both their debts. Jesus asked Simon, "Now which of them will love him more?"

Jesus' probing question put Simon on the spot. It pointed to the paramount issue — love — and to the

fact that the woman whom Simon had scorned was a shining example of love for Jesus. Jesus' love for the woman changed her story. The life of shame, rejection, and isolation that her family, community, and the religious leaders had written for her had been deleted in the presence of her Savior.

The good news is that Jesus' love still writes surprise endings to our stories today. In Malawi, for example, Yvonne Phiri grew up in a poor home. She attended high school, but was forced to quit so she could help her mother sell goods at the market. As a teenaged girl working in a public place, she was exposed to people who cared nothing for her and was vulnerable to the ploys of unscrupulous men. Desperate to earn money and survive, Yvonne eventually became a sex trade worker.

Yvonne's story seemed destined for a bitter, broken ending, but God had other plans. In Yvonne's village, World Renew had established a social support group for girls trapped in the sex trade. When Yvonne was asked to join the group, she didn't hesitate. Now, she testifies that her life has been completely transformed. She has returned to high school and has a dream of becoming a nurse.

When you consider the needs of people in our world today, what kinds of endings do you anticipate for their stories? Does the truth that Jesus' love writes surprise endings to stories shape your response to global needs?

DAY 3

Only

LUKE 9:10-17

Do you ever wish that you could take back just one word? Maybe it was a word of frustration voiced at one of your children, or a complaint expressed at work that was overheard by someone you wish hadn't.

When Jesus commanded his disciples to feed five thousand people, their response included one word that they might have regretted later on: **Only** — “We have **only** five loaves of bread and two fish” (Luke 9:13a).

Most of us can probably relate to the disciples' reaction. **Only** is a word that often shapes the stories we tell ourselves. Sometimes, we think we aren't good enough to do God's work. Maybe we think we have failed him before and that he is no longer interested in our service. Or maybe a deep sense of unworthiness steals our hope of being able to serve God in our future. We're convinced that someone else can do the job better than we can. These stories we tell ourselves can deter us from fighting injustice, poverty, and oppression in our local communities and around the world. That's not what God has in mind for us. Just as Jesus didn't allow the stories the disciples told themselves to determine the outcome for a crowd of hungry people, so He has great things in mind for us despite the stories we tell ourselves.

Jesus revealed himself as the Story-Changer when the food provided by God was multiplied in ways the disciples could never have dreamed of. Jesus obliterated their narrow vision defined by the word **only** when they witnessed that all the people were satisfied and there were twelve basketsful of broken pieces left over!

What will it take to delete the word **only** from our stories so that we embrace the liberating view of ourselves that God has of us — a view that will set us free to serve him in his world and to work toward transformation?

The apostle Paul gives us a clue: “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen” (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Paul's focus is on the immeasurable power of God! That power can bring about changes in ways that we can't even begin to dream of. That power encourages us to delete **only** from our stories and tackle issues like global poverty with the skills and talents that God has given us.

DAY 2

The Unseen Story

EPHESIANS 6:10-20

According to the apostle Paul, one of the first steps to becoming a story-changer is to acknowledge the hurdles you are up against. He writes, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12).

In other words, as we strive to model Jesus and respond to the needs of vulnerable people around the world, we are not just dealing with a physical need to provide healthcare or food. We are also engaged in a spiritual struggle. A story from World Renew's ministry provides a great example. World Renew has spent decades in this region, helping people improve their lives through programs in improved healthcare, childhood vaccinations, and adult literacy classes.

As part of this ministry, World Renew has also provided box libraries — metal boxes that contain booklets in the local language that people can use to practice their newfound literacy skills. The booklets are written at a basic level and contain information on a variety of relevant topics such as how to treat common cattle diseases, people's rights under the Malian legal system, and child health. There are also several books of the Bible.

While most of the people in this region are Muslim, several people have come to Christ as a result of World Renew's programs.

In 2015, this ministry became dangerous. For several years, a Fulani jihadist group had been attacking communities in the North with an extreme agenda. Led by a radical preacher named Amadou Koufa, they declared that Western education and culture are evil and must be wiped out. In 2015, this conflict reached the regions where World Renew was working.

"Some of the young men who have joined Koufa's jihad are from villages where we have box libraries," said World Renew's West Africa Team Leader, Mary Crickmore. "This has made it very dangerous for World Renew staff to go out to visit and maintain the box libraries. But it also makes the presence of books and Scriptures in Fulani villages extremely important so that people will have the opportunity to hear the message of truth in Christ."

One brave young man, named Brehima Diarra, understood the urgency of getting that message out to as many people as possible. He is a Christian and agreed to help with the dangerous job of transporting books on his motorcycle to the villages.

World Renew staff prayed for Brehima Diarra as he travelled. They understood the necessity of prayer as a weapon in the spiritual struggle. They realized that there are forces that want Jesus' followers to fail as they seek to tell people about him and to help improve people's lives. Brehima Diarra reached his destination and was also able to return safely!

As we seek to be story-changers, let us remember the amazing weapon we have at our disposal. When we surround ourselves in prayer and give all our activity up to God, we can live in the strength of the Lord and his mighty power.

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DAY 1

Jesus is the Story-Changer

LUKE 4:14-30

Jesus came to earth to change the story. In the beginning, all was perfect in the Garden of Eden, but when Adam and Eve sinned everything changed. The world became a place with sadness, injustice, and brokenness. It was a story that needed to be changed. In the

face of the Fall, God promised to send someone who would crush Satan's head, speak words of victory over death, and prepare the way for everything to be made new. And that's just what He did.

At the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus said, "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to

proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18-19).

This proclamation revealed that Jesus not only came to save humanity from eternal separation from God, but also to bring his kingdom here on earth. Jesus was changing the story not

just of people's souls but also of their physical well-being. It is a story that will come to completion when Jesus comes again, but has already started in the here and now.

Jesus healed the sick, cared for the poor, and fought against injustice. He calls us to do the same.

For more than 50 years, World Renew has been blessed to be an agent of the Church around the world. Christians who want to live out God's call to care for those in need, have trusted World Renew with their financial gifts and volunteer resources. Together with other international aid organizations, World Renew has seen the fruits of this investment.

Recent reports have shown that the number of hungry people in our world has declined by more than 100 million people over the past decade and by more than 200 million since the early 1990s. That is something to truly praise God for!

Yes, we also know that we have a long way to go. Today, 1.2 billion people are still living in extreme poverty. That means that they survive on less than \$1.25 per day. Of those in poverty, 795 million people — approximately one out of every nine people on earth — experience hunger daily. As a result, three million children under the age of five die every year as a result of poor nutrition.

In the next two weeks, World Renew invites you to read the following devotions. You will have the opportunity to give thanks with us for the ways God has changed the stories of people throughout the world. You will also be challenged to join in this transforming work.

Jesus taught that he is the vine and we are the branches. Apart from him we can accomplish nothing, but when we remain in him he will empower us to do great things. As story-changers reflecting the Master Story-Changer, we move forward with confidence because in him we are new creations. The old has gone! The new is come!

(2 Corinthians 5:17)



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LIVING JUSTICE • LOVING MERCY • SERVING CHRIST



Changing the Story

World Hunger Campaign
ADULT DEVOTIONAL