

**Title: Witness****[Slide 1]****Text: Luke 23:55-24:11****“This is your life”****GoPro****[Slide 2]**

It began in 2004 as a wrist-mounted 35 mm film camera invented by a surfer who wanted to take pictures *inside* a wave. Nick Woodman pitched his idea to family and friends, raised money selling bead and shell belts out of his VW van, and changed the world.

In 2013 Nick Woodman’s company, GoPro, sold almost \$1 billion worth of products. His cameras can take up to 4 hours of high resolution video. Every day 6000 new GoPro videos are uploaded to YouTube by his customers.

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GoPro’s pitch is simple and catchy:

This is your life.  
Be a hero.  
Capture + share your world.

You don’t have to be rich or famous. You don’t have to be sponsored by a major corporation. Just strap on the camera or attach it to you helmet and go do your thing. *This is your life*. You get to be the hero. And then you get to *share your world with others*. A picture’s worth 1000 words.

**“This is your life”:**

Luke tells us the story of a most unlikely group of heroes who found themselves caught up in the middle of an adventure that was darker and confusing than they could have ever imagined.

Ask them what they were doing in Jerusalem in April, A.D. 30 and they would have said: "We're followers of Rabbi Jesus of Nazareth. *This is our life.*"

They remained true to Jesus throughout the terror of His arrest and trial and the horror of His crucifixion. Luke tells us that even when the 12 Disciples were nowhere to be found, a band of men and women stood their ground some distance from the Cross, carefully taking in every detail of what seemed to be the bitter end of Jesus' story. Little did they know at the time, but God had put them there to be His "GoPros."

### **The power of seeing:**

Ancient Greek and Roman historians like Luke understood the *power of seeing* and valued eyewitness experience as the gold standard for writing history. Historians often quoted the Greek historian Heraclitus:

*"Eyes are surer witnesses than ears."* (as cited in Bauckham, *Gospel Women*, p.296)

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The best eyewitness was someone

*"...who as a participant, had been closest to the events and whose direct experience enabled him or her to understand and interpret the significance of what he or she had seen."* (ibid., p.296)

Nowhere is this more evident than on the morning that a group of very *ordinary* human beings stumbled into the greatest adventure of all time.

## **"Be a Hero"**

### **Friday evening, April 7, A.D. 30 (Luke 23:52-56):**

Luke tells us that on Friday evening of what was most likely April 7, A.D. 30 a wealthy Jewish leader received custody of Jesus' body and buried Him in a

new rock-cut tomb. Meanwhile, a group of women who had long followed Jesus took great pains to see exactly what happened to the body of their Lord.

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*Luke 23:52-55 NIV*

*Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. <sup>53</sup> Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. <sup>54</sup> It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin.*

***<sup>55</sup> The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it.***

God's GoPros: Luke describes how the women witnessed the burial of Jesus by using the word from which we get our English word 'theater.' It means to gaze at or view attentively. This was no quick glance or casual observance. The women took in every detail of how Jesus' body was prepared and where it was placed.

Why such attention? Jesus was buried in haste as the sun set on Sabbath Eve. The women knew that they would need to return on Sunday to finish the funeral arrangements. But to do so they had to first *know exactly where He had been buried*. Luke goes on to tell us that they went home and prepared the necessary spices and perfumes.

"Eyes are surer witnesses than ears." That terrible evening the eyes which watched Jesus' burial were those of that group of women.

**Sunday morning, April 9, A.D. 30 (Luke 24:1-8):**

It was this same group of women who faithfully returned as planned on Sunday morning. Little did they know that spring morning that what they would see and experience would change their – and our – lives forever. But let's let them tell the story as they saw it:

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*At the crack of dawn on Sunday, we came to the tomb carrying the burial spices we had prepared. We found the entrance stone rolled back from the tomb, so we walked in. But once inside, we couldn't find the body of the Master Jesus.*

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*We were puzzled, wondering what to make of this. Then, out of nowhere it seemed, two men, light cascading over them, stood there. We were awestruck and bowed down in worship.*

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*The men said, "Why are you looking for the Living One in a cemetery? He is not here, but raised up. Remember how he told you when you were still back in Galilee that he had to be handed over to sinners, be killed on a cross, and in three days rise up?"*

*Then we remembered Jesus' words.*

(Adapted from The Message, Luke 24:1-8)

**"Be a Hero"**

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In order to *have a story*, you have to *live a story*. And that is precisely what these women did. They got up early on Sunday morning and went to a graveyard. They found that the tomb they were looking for had been disturbed – no doubt robbed over the weekend.

That would have been enough for me. I'd have been out of there, long gone back to town. Remember, the tombs of that time were rooms cut into a rock face. The chamber would have been pitch black, except for a shaft of light coming through the low doorway. It would have smelled of death, only partially masked by perfumes and spices. But they went in anyway, taking in everything they saw.

Then, blazing light in the pitch black chamber. Messengers from heaven asked why they were looking for the living among the dead. And still they hung in there, remembering that Jesus had said He would rise again.

This was their story. They lived it. They saw it through. Without them we would have never known. They are lived that story and emerged God's heroes.

## **"Capture + Share Your World"**

### **Later that morning (Luke 24:9-11)**

"Live your life," "Be a hero," "Capture + share your world." That is what God's GoPros did:

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*Luke 24:9-10 NIV*

*When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles.*

Luke tells us the names of three of the women: Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Mary the mother of James. While there were other women present at the tomb – as we learn from the other gospels – these women served in a special way as Luke's **source** for this amazing story.

#### **Living Gospels:**

Luke tells what happened when they gave their report:

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*Luke 24:11-12 NIV*

*But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense. Peter, however, got up and ran to the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying by themselves, and he went away, wondering to himself what had happened.*

We can hardly blame the 11 disciples for failing to embrace the amazing story the women told. Jesus had died on a Roman cross in front of the entire city. He had been in the grave for three days now, long enough to be considered dead and gone. What's more, women were considered less than

trustworthy as witnesses. In fact, a woman's testimony was not permitted in a Jewish court!

But God had entrusted the news that Jesus was raised from the dead to that brave and observant group of women disciples. They – not Peter --were the ones who had seen Jesus die. They – not the 11 Disciples -- were the ones who had seen where and how He was buried. They alone were the ones who found His tomb. They were the ones *who remembered His promise that after three days He would rise again.*"

The women didn't back down. They didn't change their story to accommodate the doubts of the 11 disciples. In fact, they were so sure of their story that Peter finally had to go see for himself.

This was their story. They were there. "Eyes are surer witnesses than ears."

Early Christian writers tell us that both men and women disciples traveled their world as witnesses to what they had seen Jesus say and do. And the witnesses with the most powerful story were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and the others who made the early morning journey to an empty tomb.

"Eyes are surer witnesses than ears."

### **"Capture + Share Your World"**

God's story isn't finished, and He's not finished making heroes that will capture + share the Good News. We are called to be God's GoPro's.

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Is there a place in your world where death must give way to His new life? You may be coming to finish the funeral. Look again: is it possible that Someone has moved the stone?

If so, would you dare to enter that place of loss and death? And if you did, what would you do if God Himself announced to you that He is bringing New Life right in that place of death and loss?

When that happens – and it happens every day! – we become part of God's Story. We become a new generation of heroes who are living His new life.

And when His Story has become *our story*, we share it with our world.

"This is your life."

"Be a hero."

"Capture + share your world."