

# Your Story: Share His Wondrous Works

MY FRIENDS WILLIE AND JASON ate cheeseburgers with Sean, a friend of Jason's. Then, spiritual beliefs entered the conversation. As Sean shared his thoughts, he vented about his dislike of Christianity. He explained his perspective that churches were primarily after people's money and promoted intolerance and hate. After listening, Willie told Sean that he was sad about Sean's negative experience of Christianity. Then, Willie asked if he could share his thoughts about Christianity. After Sean gave permission, Willie recounted that as a younger man his priority was to live however he wanted and didn't really care about who he might hurt as he did. He revealed that since he grew up without a father, he longed to feel real love and approval. As they continued their meal, Willie opened up Psalm 51 on his phone and read aloud what it said about God's unfailing love and willingness to cleanse those who put their trust in him. Then, Willie shared Psalm 51's connection to the turning point in his story—when God mercifully revealed to him how much he was hurting people in his life. Willie realized that he had been ignoring and distrusting God. He understood for the first time that he needed Jesus's payment for his wrongs and God's forgiveness. Willie sincerely conveyed how he placed his faith in Jesus and is now experiencing joy, peace, and the love and approval of a Heavenly Father—even as Willie continues to make mistakes. After listening to Willie's story, Sean conveyed that it was deeply moving and began to ask questions.

Although Sean hadn't expected it, hearing about the difference that Jesus made in Willie's life was cool water to a parched soul. God moves mightily as believers share their specific experience of how Jesus has changed and is changing their lives. The earlier guide, *Sharing Our Life Stories*, facilitated you contemplating how your story shapes who you are. The guide also helped you and your discipleship partners truly know one another. The goal of this guide, as the second of three focused on evangelism,<sup>1</sup> is to help you consider and utilize your story as one of the most effective tools that you have to share your faith with non-Christians.

Psalm 105:2 declares, "Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples ... *tell of all his wondrous works!*"<sup>2</sup> About this passage, Tim Keller writes, "Believers rightly hear this as a summons to tell others around us what he has done in our lives. Too often we stay silent about his saving actions in our own histories. We might think that keeping quiet about such things is modesty but its effect is the opposite. It allows others to believe that we have overcome our problems and lived our lives on our own strength."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The first guide about evangelism is "Spiritual Conversations: A First Step in Evangelism," and the third is "The Bridge Illustration & Sharing the Gospel Clearly;" both available in the *Discipleship Journey Guidebook* and at [djourney.org/guides](http://djourney.org/guides).

<sup>2</sup> Emphasis added.

<sup>3</sup> Tim Keller, *The Songs of Jesus* (New York: Viking, 2016), 264.

Sharing about Jesus's work in your life helps ensure that you do not get the credit for God's blessings. As a Christian, you have a unique faith story that both demonstrates the fallenness of humanity and God's specific grace toward you. You know the ways that the Good News *is* indeed good news. As you reflect on God's love for you, you will be compelled to share it with others (2 Cor. 5:14-21). That's what happened with many in Scripture who encountered Jesus. It changed them and they passionately expressed their personal experience of Jesus with those around them. The Samaritan woman at the well said, "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did" (John 4:29a). When the apostle Paul stood before King Agrippa, he told him simply and clearly about his life before salvation, how he met Jesus, and what his life was like after conversion (Acts 26).

Sharing your faith story has distinctive benefits as a part of evangelism. First, *people love stories*—they are interesting, compelling, and open up the heart. Jesus, the master story teller, knew this and employed them often. Further, both the telling and hearing of one's story is *inherently relational*. Humans naturally look for connecting points to their lives, and a non-Christian, upon hearing parts of your story, might think "I can relate to that." You are surrounded by people who are genuinely interested in what has "worked" for others to have better lives. You believe in the gospel not only due to its benefits but because of its truth. At the same time, non-Christians seek to see *how* your faith *specifically* makes a significant difference in your life. Lastly, *people will be respectful* and almost always give you the conversational space to briefly share your story—especially if you ask permission. Rarely will someone argue with you about your story, including your personal experience of Jesus.

Sean continued discussing Jesus with Willie and Jason and came to the point that he told them that he too wanted to place his faith in Christ. Sean began to walk with Jesus, and God changed his life in amazing ways. In Jesus's last words before ascending to heaven, he declares, "You will be my *witnesses* in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." (Acts 1:8, emphasis added). As Willie did, sharing your faith story is a powerful way for you to "witness to" the life challenging reality of knowing him. Are you willing to tell God's wondrous work in your life? Consider now principles for preparing your faith story, options for what to share, and, finally, how to put it all together succinctly.

## PREPARING YOUR FAITH STORY<sup>4</sup>

Keep the following principles in mind as you prepare your faith story:

1. Be vulnerable and detail your brokenness. This will help you focus on *why* you needed a savior—which, at least to start, is usually more helpful than *how* you came to Christ.
2. Sharing your story needs to go hand in hand with being a good listener.<sup>5</sup> Asking good questions (for example, "Where are you now in your spiritual journey?") will communicate sincere interest,

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<sup>4</sup> Incorporated into the following section are insights from these sources: Bob McNabb, *Spiritual Multiplication in the Real World* (Multiplication Press, 2013) 99-100; The Navigators, *The 2:7 Series: Book 2, Deepening Your Roots in God's Family* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2019); Cru, *Your Story is God's Story: Creating Your Testimony* and *Tell Your Story: 10 Tips for Sharing Your Testimony With Others* at [cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/share-the-gospel/evangelism-principles](http://cru.org/us/en/train-and-grow/share-the-gospel/evangelism-principles) (accessed July 7, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. "Spiritual Conversations: A First Step in Evangelism;" available in the *Discipleship Journey Guidebook* and at [djourney.org/guides](http://djourney.org/guides).

likely open a door for you to tell about your experience, and give insight to what specifically would be best to share.

3. Here's a simple question to ask before sharing: "Can I briefly share my spiritual story with you?"
4. Avoid "Christianese" or overly-religious terms that might be confusing or distracting.
5. Remember that the Holy Spirit gives you the power to be his witness and that he is always with you (Acts 1:7-8, Mt. 28:20). You don't have to be eloquent (1 Corinthians 2:1-5), just be honest about how Jesus has changed your life.
6. Last but not least, take a moment to pray right now. Pray that God would give you the words to say and opportunities to share with others.

### **OPTIONS FOR WHAT TO SHARE**

Sharing your faith story can involve some combination of the difference Jesus *has* made and the difference Jesus *is* making. If you entered into a relationship with Jesus at a young age (praise God!), you may choose to emphasize the latter. In this section, you might simply answer the questions with words or phrases that you can flesh out in the following "putting it all together" section.

#### *The difference Jesus has made*

1. What was your life like before you surrendered it to Jesus? What were the key problems, emotions, situations, or attitudes you were dealing with?
2. How did you try to satisfy your desires for security, identity, or happiness (e.g., with work, money, drugs, relationships, sports, sex, pornography, etc.)? In what ways did these things let you down?
3. What made you interested in Jesus? When did you sense a need for him? How did your perspective of Jesus begin to change?
4. What has changed about your life since you have entered into a relationship with Jesus?

## *The difference that Jesus is making now*

1. What are your biggest struggles now? What are the key problems, emotions, situations, or attitudes that you deal with?
2. Other than your relationship with Jesus, how do you now try to satisfy your desires for security, identity, or happiness? In what ways do these things let you down?
3. How does your relationship with Jesus make a daily difference in your thoughts, attitudes, and emotions (e.g., knowing his unconditional love, approval, comfort, joy, peace, perspective, etc.)? What do you especially appreciate about him? What motivates you?

### **PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER SUCCINCTLY**

The Bible says to always be ready to give a reason for the hope you have in Christ (1 Peter 3:15). One great way to be prepared is to write out your spiritual story ahead of time. Here are some points to guide you:

1. Keep it brief. Aim to tell your story in two to three minutes. At that length, it's easily something you can share in a conversation without it becoming a monologue.
2. Think about specific non-Christians you know. What did you write above that might be *most* compelling or helpful to them?
3. It's a good idea to end with a question. For example, "That's the difference Jesus has made in my life... What are your thoughts?" "... What do you believe about Jesus?" "... Can you imagine how entering into a relationship with Jesus would affect you?"
4. It's wise to practice sharing your story out loud several times until you feel comfortable with it.
5. In the space below, write out or make bullet points of what you'd share about your personal experience of Jesus. Again, the broad flow will be to express your need for Jesus and how Jesus has made a difference.

*Answer these questions on your own and then discuss them with your discipleship partners:*

1. What is most compelling to you about believers sharing their faith stories?
2. What question from the “Options for what to share” section was most helpful to you? How did you answer it?
3. Take turns conveying what you’d share with a non-Christian (“Putting it all together succinctly,” point #5). Give each other encouragement and feedback.
4. List five non-Christians in your life. Are you willing to commit to asking God for an opportunity to share your personal experience of Jesus with one or more of these persons?
5. What other takeaway(s) do you have from this guide?

THIS GUIDE IS FREELY AVAILABLE AT [DJOURNEY.ORG](http://DJOURNEY.ORG).