

TELLING MY STORY

THE VALUE OF YOUR STORY

1. It is unique! There are no others just like it.
2. It is personal and easy to understand.
3. You are the authority on it. It's difficult to argue with.
4. People love to hear personal stories and they remember them.
5. People can relate to it. It builds a relational bridge.
6. In our postmodern world, it may be your most effective witness.

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.” 1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

A. IF YOU BECAME A CHRISTIAN AS AN ADULT

THE FOUR PARTS OF YOUR STORY

1. WHAT MY LIFE WAS LIKE BEFORE I MET CHRIST.

*What common circumstances would an unbeliever identify with?
What were your attitudes that an unbeliever would identify with?
What was most important to you?
What substitute for God did you use to find meaning in your life?
(sports/fitness, success at work, marriage, sex, making money,
drugs/alcohol, having fun, entertainment, popularity, hobbies)*

2. HOW I REALIZED I NEEDED CHRIST.

*What significant steps led up to your conversion?
What needs, hurts, or problems made you dissatisfied
with the way you were living without God?
How did God get your attention? What motivated you?*

3. HOW I COMMITTED MY LIFE TO CHRIST.

*What specifically did you do? Where did it happen?
What did you say in your prayer? Be specific.*

4. THE DIFFERENCE IT HAS MADE IN MY LIFE.

*What benefits have you experienced or felt?
What problems have been resolved?
How has Jesus helped you change for the better?
How has it helped your relationships?
Give a current example.*

The STORY Pyramid



B. IF YOU BECAME A CHRISTIAN AS A CHILD BUT WALKED AWAY OR NEVER GREW UNTIL A DEEPER RECOMMITMENT AS AN ADULT.

Use the same four steps, but start with the time just prior to your *recommitment*. Give some examples of how you were trying to meet your own needs without Christ but it wasn't working. Describe what caused you to realize you needed Christ directing your life and how you made a full commitment to him. Then explain how Jesus is currently meeting the deepest needs in your life.

C. IF YOU BECAME A CHRISTIAN AT AN EARLY AGE AND NEVER STRAYED.

Use the same four steps with this modification: Point out some deep need or common problem that you see *other people* trying to resolve. Point out how unsuccessful their attempts are to meet their own need. Then explain why you never experienced that problem by trusting Christ early in life. Don't say the exact age. Continue with steps 3 and 4.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARING YOUR STORY

- Pray and ask God to give you the right words.
- Write it out on paper. God honors preparation.

- Keep it short and to the point. Don't lose site of your goal.
- Be succinct. Avoid excessive, unnecessary details.
- Try to keep your STORY below 3 minutes.

- Refer to experiences most people have in common.
- Share a slice of your life (a story) that they will identify with.

- Be honest about your continuing struggles. Your life is not perfect.
- Don't imply that all of your problems ended at conversion.

- Spend the most time on part 4: the difference Christ has made.
- Emphasize WHY you received Christ (the benefits of doing it).
- Mention the benefit of being certain of your destiny when you die.

- Don't exaggerate or brag about pre-conversion sins.
- Don't make negative remarks about other religions or people.
- Don't mention any denomination.

- Don't quote a lot of Scripture. (A maximum of one verse)
- Don't answer questions they haven't asked.

- Give concrete examples of the changes in your life.
- The more specific you are, the more dynamic it will be.
- Avoid using dates, names, and ages. It doesn't matter to them.

- Be prepared. Practice it until it feels and sounds natural.
- Read it aloud and edit it to make it conversational.
- Let a friend read it and make suggestions.

- Speak casually and informally, in a matter-of-fact tone.
- Don't dramatize or embellish your story.
- Don't share mystical experiences. Share on *their* level, not *yours*.

- Don't talk down to people. Don't sound "preachy."
- Use "*I, me, and my*" not "*You*". It's about you – not them.
- Use humor - it reduces tension and relaxes people. Smile!

- Choose a central theme. (See list)

POSSIBLE STORY THEMES

How Trusting Jesus has helped me deal with my...

- Worries / Anxiety
- Guilt/Shame
- Anger / Temper
- Emptiness/Lack of Purpose
- Grief
- Stress / Burnout
- Low self-esteem
- Poor health
- Disappointment
- Insecurity
- Regrets
- Discontent / frantic activity
- Fears
- Loneliness
- Lack of emotional support
- Addictions / Habits
- Self-centeredness
- Despair / Depression
- Cheap thrills
- Boredom with my life
- Fear of Death
- "Something was missing"
- Bitterness & resentment
- Pain of rejection
- Marriage Problems
- Financial Problems
- Business Problems

How Trusting Jesus has given me

- Inner Peace
- Forgiveness and a fresh start
- Patience and love
- Purpose in life and meaning
- Comfort and Joy
- New energy and power for living
- Significance. I am valuable to God
- Strength to go on
- Trust in his good plans
- Confidence and sense of security
- A second chance at life
- Contentment and peace
- Faith to face my fears
- Assurance He's always with me.
- A church family that supports me.
- Power to change. Freedom
- Love for other people
- Hope
- Real, lasting happiness
- Adventure with God
- Assurance of heaven
- A sense of fulfillment
- The ability to be free from my past
- God's unconditional love
- Positive changes in my marriage
- Positive changes in my finances
- Positive changes in my business

God allows experiences in my life so I can relate to others who need Christ!

COMMON GROUND CIRCUMSTANCES

Could you give a STORY about how Jesus helped you with any of the following experiences?

POSITIVE:

Adoption, breaking a bad habit, financial gain, raising kids, marriage strengthened or restored, new baby, new business, new friends, new home, new marriage, new job, success, renewed love, restored relationships

MAJOR CRISES

Abuse, accident, addiction, abortion, bankruptcy, broken dream, eating disorder, death, depression, disease, discrimination, divorce, empty nest, financial problems, infertility, incest, jail, rape, surgery

- **Realize you have more than one STORY!**
- Different situations will require different testimonies!
- Choose the STORY that best matches your listener.
- Realize you can tell about how others' lives have been changed too. Your small group can share your stories with each other.
- Don't use religious terms or clichés or broad generalities.
- Ask: "If I were an unbeliever, would this make sense to me?"

TRANSLATING CHRISTIAN WORDS

A cliché lexicon

CHRISTIAN TERM	WHEN TALKING WITH SEEKERS
<i>"Blessed"</i>	<i>"Happy"</i>
<i>"I was Born Again"</i>	<i>"I was given a fresh, new start"</i>
<i>"I was Saved"</i>	<i>"My life changed at that moment"</i>
<i>"Jesus is my Lord"</i>	<i>"He's the Manager/CEO of my Life"</i>
<i>"I repented"</i>	<i>"I put Jesus in the driver's seat."</i>
<i>"I had sinned"</i>	<i>"I changed my mind" (a mental U-turn)</i>
<i>"All are sinners"</i>	<i>"I knew I'd blown it"</i>
<i>"I felt convicted"</i>	<i>"Nobody's perfect. No one bats 1000"</i>
<i>"The Holy Ghost"</i>	<i>"I realized that..."</i>
	<i>"God's Spirit"</i>

PHRASES TO AVOID IN A STORY TO UNBELIEVER

"I just Praise the Lord for..." "Now I am so blessed" "Hallelujah!"
"Amen" "It was glorious" "I was convicted" "The Lord laid on my heart"

TELLING MY STORY

Worksheet

PART A – IDENTIFYING THE TESTIMONY THEMES OF MY LIFE

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worries/Anxiety.....Inner Peace | <input type="checkbox"/> Loneliness.....He's always with me |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Guilt/Shame.....Forgiveness | <input type="checkbox"/> Addictions/Habits.....Power to change |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anger/Temper.....Patience and love | <input type="checkbox"/> Self-centeredness..... Love for other people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Emptiness/Lack of PurposePurpose in life | <input type="checkbox"/> Despair/Depression..... Hope |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grief.....Comfort and joy | <input type="checkbox"/> Cheap thrills.....Real, lasting happiness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stress/Burnout.....Power for living | <input type="checkbox"/> Boredom with my life.....Adventure with God |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Low self-esteem.....Significance to God | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear of Death.....Assurance of heaven |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Poor health.....Strength to go on | <input type="checkbox"/> "Something was missing".....Sense of fulfillment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Disappointment..... Trust in his good plans | <input type="checkbox"/> Bitterness & Resentment.....Freedom from my past |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Insecurity..... Confidence and security | <input type="checkbox"/> Pain of rejection.....God's unconditional love |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Regrets.....A second chance at life | <input type="checkbox"/> Marriage Problems.....Changes in my marriage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Discontent-Always busy.....Contentment and peace | <input type="checkbox"/> Financial Problems.....Changes in my finances |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fears.....Faith to face my fears | <input type="checkbox"/> Business Problems.....Changes in my business |

The most predominate theme in my life: _____

PART B - WRITING MY TESTIMONY

1. What my life was like before I met Christ.

What common circumstances would an unbeliever identify with? What were your attitudes that an unbeliever would identify with? What was most important to you? What substitute for God did you use to find meaning in your life? (sports/fitness, success at work, marriage, sex, making money, drugs/alcohol, having fun, entertainment, popularity, hobbies)

2. How I realized I needed Christ.

What significant steps led up to your conversion? What needs, hurts, or problems made you dissatisfied with the way you were living without God? (Choose a theme) How did God get your attention? What motivated you?

3. **How I committed my life to Christ.**

What specifically did you do to step across line? Where did it happen? What did you say in your prayer? Be specific.

4. **The difference it has made in my life.**

What benefits have you experienced or felt? What problems have been resolved? How has Jesus helped you change for the better? How has it helped your relationships? Give a current example.

5. **Combined – All 4 Parts. (use back)**

**(Make a 2 minute version, a 5 minute version and a 10 minute version.)
Now Share It!**