

Story permeates our culture today. If someone tells you a “fact” they read in a book, or something they saw happen out their window, which are you more likely to believe or get caught up in? Are you more willing to purchase a product because you saw a picture of it, or because someone you know has it and loves it? Throughout history story has grasped us and engaged our hearts. It intrigues us, informs us, and even educates us. The use of story is powerful!



Each of our stories holds the most dramatic elements. We each have our own personal story of a heroic pursuit resulting in a dramatic rescue! Each of us has a story that is unique to us, and yet full of the power of the gospel.

Through this compelling combination we are able to relate the gospel to those around us in an approachable, relatable, and familiar way. 1 Peter 3:15 gives us the instruction to “always be prepared to give a reason for the hope within us,” and having your story ready to tell is a great way for us to prepare. Even though your story is specific to you, it originates with the Lord, develops with Him and ends with Him; it should therefore be about Him.

Paul's Story

While Paul was under arrest in Jerusalem he had the opportunity to tell his story. Look at his example in Acts 21:40-22:21. Paul divided his story into three parts:

Before he knew Christ:	He shared about his attitudes and the supporting actions prior to becoming a believer (Acts 22:1-5).
How he came to know Christ:	He explained how he came to faith in Christ (Acts 22:6-11).
After accepting Christ:	He explained how becoming a follower of Christ changed his life (Acts 22:12-21).

The gospel is the purpose of sharing your story. Talking about the gospel requires talking about the events on the cross. You must include it! Ask yourself: after hearing this would someone know how to begin a personal relationship with Jesus? Would they know how to go from darkness to light?

Why take time to think through and write out your story? Often we think because it's our story we know what we'd share if given an opportunity. However, we in the course of conversation, can become distracted and lose our place. We run the risk of not communicating what we desire and in the end not be sure if we communicated the gospel clearly.

We all have short attention spans and it's only getting shorter. When we tell others our story we want them to hear it. We need to be respectful of their time and attention span and keep our stories short and to the point. It should really be 3 minutes at most! Yes, there's a lot of information we want to share in that 3 minutes, but if we focus we can be sure to communicate the most pertinent parts. Then, if others want to hear more eventually, they are welcome to ask for more details. Another reason to have a short version scripted is that it is easy to lengthen and still communicate clearly on the fly, but much harder to shorten and still be clear.

Writing out your story and practicing it will benefit you in numerous ways. It enables you to figure out the best way to communicate it clearly. It makes you more natural when you tell it, and enables you to jump around if interrupted. It also makes you ready when the opportunity arises, which you'll find is more often than you thought! On top of that, it is also a great personal benefit to spend time realizing the unique ways that the Lord brought you to himself and give him glory for it.



Writing your story:

1. Pray that the Lord would use this process to be a celebration of his work in your life and to prepare you for a lifetime of telling your story.

2. Process through the questions on the next page covering the before, how, and after portions of your story. Journal through them, pray through them, talk

through them with a friend... do whatever helps you to process them.

3. Look for themes: Identify the common thread through your story. Work at crystallizing your before and after stories into a single word for each. (ie. I was striving, but now I am satisfied) You may not use that sentence in your story but starting from this point will give your story clarity. See the sample words list for help only if you are struggling here.

Before: _____

After: _____

4. Write out your story while keeping in mind the tips to the right.
5. Read and edit your story until you can communicate it in 3 minutes.
6. Deliver it to a couple of Christian friends asking for their feedback:
 - Was the transformation clear?
 - Was the gospel clear?
 - Are there any Christian words I need to remove or explain?
 - Does my love for Jesus ring out?
 - Is Jesus the focus of my story or am I the focus of my story?
7. Make final edits.
8. Know it well enough that you can communicate it well in 3 minutes without your notes. After all, it is your story!
9. Pray that you would see opportunities to share your story.

Writing tips:

- Use common and ordinary language, not words typically only understood by Christians. If you want to use a word they may not know just make sure you clarify their meaning. Examples: sacrifice, the gospel, repentance
- Be truthful; don't embellish or sensationalize. You will not only be lying, but you'll also fail to relate if you exaggerate.
- Be personal and use your own language. When you talk about God, personalize Him too.
- Avoid mentioning denominations, other groups, organizations, or people by name. You don't want to speak negatively of them and possibly alienate someone listening to you.
- This isn't a time to teach, preach, exhort, or other extra add-ons. It's about how God has pursued you and brought you into a relationship with Jesus. 1 Corinthians 2:1-2 says, "I didn't use lofty words and brilliant ideas to tell you God's message. For I decided to concentrate only on Jesus Christ and his death on the cross." Keep focused.
- Remember, you're communicating the ways that Jesus has transformed your heart, not how you spend all your time. This is not a time to discuss your 'church resume' or your extensive involvement in religious things or groups.

<p>Before: <i>This section is about how you came to realize you needed Christ. It's not your life story just the parts pertinent to Jesus pursuing your heart.</i></p>	<p>How: <i>This section is about why and how you became a Christian. It will give a clear picture of the gospel and how one can respond to it.</i></p>	<p>After: <i>The emphasis is on character changes, attitude changes, and heart changes (think things you couldn't change on your own) instead of behavior changes. Your behavior has changed, but it's because of something deeper.</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was my spiritual viewpoint before receiving Christ? • How did my spiritual state negatively affect my life and relationships? Specific examples. • How did I learn or hear the gospel message that changed my life? • What was my life like? • What did my life revolve around? • From what/where/whom did I get my happiness, security, approval, meaning, hope, satisfaction, etc? • How did these things affect my relationship with self, relationships with others, and thoughts about God? • How did these things let me down/ not satisfy? • How did my misplaced sources of satisfaction cause me to become disappointed, jaded, or disenchanted? • What were the experiences, dissonance and questions that caused me to search for new answers? • Where was I dissatisfied with life and the world? • What were the pivotal events and experiences that moved me into a time of searching? • How did dissatisfaction show itself in my life? • What were some of the questions that rose from this dissatisfaction? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When was the first time I heard the gospel (or was exposed to dynamic Christianity)? • What were my initial reactions? • What was it about the message that affected me or struck me the most? • What was my response to the message? • What was my first impression of dynamic Christians? • How did interacting with them change my spiritual viewpoint? • When did I receive Christ? • Why did I ultimately accept Christ? • How did Jesus Christ answer my questions or satisfy my search? • What led me to consider Jesus as the answer? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did my attitudes and life change after I received Christ? (Try to relate this to one of the problems you've already listed) • How long did it take before I noticed changes? (Many things change immediately, but did your life look drastically different the next moment, or did it take time?) • What are the specific changes Christ made in my life? • What other benefits have I realized since receiving Christ? • What problems do I still struggle with? • What's different about my response to struggle or difficulty? • How is God helping to make a difference? • How and why am I motivated differently now? • Why was accepting Jesus worth it? • How did Christ begin to meet my needs or give me insight about my emotions or problems? • How do I live differently now because of Jesus Christ? • In what ways does the hope of complete restoration give me hope in my current struggles?
<p>If you came to Christ at a young age: <i>The "before" may be more difficult to evaluate. Some extra questions you may want to think through:</i></p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did I go through a time of rebellion or ignoring Christ in my life? • Was there a point that I was confused about whether or not I wanted Jesus in my life? • Was there a time where my faith became more real to me, or took a more significant role in my life? • What did (does) my life look like when it's characterized by me taking charge and living independent from Christ? • What did I understand about the gospel at a young age, and what did I need to learn as I got older? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When did I begin to have a greater desire to follow Christ? • What did it take for me to surrender to Jesus? • What about the gospel message drew me to a deeper relationship with Jesus? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did my life change from affiliation with God (because of my upbringing) to relationship with God? • What's the difference?



If you are stuck trying to boil down the before and after portions of your story down to one word each, try taking a look at the list below to get your mental juices flowing. But please don't feel limited to this list.

Before

- Insecure
- Anxious
- Self Doubting
- Timid
- Apprehensive
- Unsteady
- Unprotected
- Vulnerable
- Nervous
- Worried
- Concerned
- Restless
- Fretful
- Fearful
- Frightened
- Unsure
- Uncertain
- Shy
- Hesitant
- Defenseless
- Exposed
- Helpless
- Weak
- Susceptible
- Controlling
- Scheming
- Calculating
- Extreme
- Intense
- Insensitive
- Insignificant
- Fanatical
- Excessive
- Unsatisfied
- Discontent
- Unfulfilled
- Disappointed
- Disgruntled
- Driven
- Guarded
- Disbelieving
- Skeptical
- Doubting(ful)
- Devious
- Deceitful
- Conniving
- Achieving
- Performing
- Reaching
- Failing
- Crashing
- Neglected
- Bankrupt
- Striving
- Ruthless
- Determined
- Pushy
- Motivated
- Unmotivated
- Worthless
- Searching
- Seeking
- Questioning
- Hunting
- Striving
- Looking
- Lost
- Drifting
- Astray
- Confused
- Puzzled
- Perplexed
- Mystified
- Absorbed
- Abandoned
- Alone
- Suspicious
- Aimless

- Stuck
- Trapped
- Immovable
- Caught
- Offensive

After:

- Confident
- Vulnerable
- Secure
- Redeemed
- Liberated
- Free
- Delivered
- Rescued
- Loved
- Surrendered
- Yielded
- Understood
- Visible
- Seen
- Pursued
- Thriving
- Found
- Established
- Sought
- Created
- Noticed
- Special
- Accepted
- Significant
- Worthy
- Victorious
- Purposeful
- Satisfied
- Courageous
- Strong
- Satisfied
- Treasured
- Filled