

GIFT BOOK SERIES | 30 JANUARY 2022



SPEAKING OF JESUS

Everyday Practices for
Sharing Gospel Hope



PART FOUR | SHARING YOUR STORY



SHARING YOUR STORY

By David Fields

Stories are powerful – and for a lot of good reasons. They ‘connect the dots’ between events in a way that makes meaning. We can often ‘connect’ with a story in a way that simply making propositional points can never do. And God seems to know this, since the way he chooses to communicate with us is exactly *through* a story. The Bible, though it contains many different genres and types of communication (law, prophecy, poetry, apocalypse, letter to name a few) comes to us in the form of a story – a *narrative*. In fact, all the law, prophecy, poetry, apocalypse and

letter only make sense because of the larger ‘story-line’ of the Scriptures. It’s no wonder Jesus uses stories and parables to communicate. He says much more by his stories than simply making points would ever say, for we find ourselves, our own stories and hearts desires laid bare through them.

Learning to share our story as a story is a key element for us when we are “speaking of Jesus.” We’ll dive deeper into how to do that in our Study Guide.

Open Up

1. What is one of your favourite stories of all time and why? Could be a book, a movie, or a story from your family history etc. (Don't summarize the whole story, but simply share what it is and one or two key elements of the story that you connect with).
2. Do you enjoy telling stories? Why or why not?

Dig In

Read 1 Peter 3:8-16

1. In its context, Christians are being given instruction about how to live in a situation where they are being regularly persecuted. We are told in 1 Peter 3:8 to be a community that is like-minded, sympathetic, loving, compassionate and humble. That's the sort of community we are to be to each other. What impact would this way of life have on the watching world – especially one that is violent and divided? How might that be the case in our setting too? How can you contribute to these same virtues in our community?
2. In verse 9 we read: "Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing..." We are told to do good, even to those who treat us wrongly. How would living like that in your workplace, on social media, or in your broader community beg questions, or lead people to ask you to "give an answer to everyone who asks about the reasons for the hope that you have"?
3. How might sharing your own story be an important part of giving "an answer" to those who ask about your faith?
4. Though the Greek word *apologia* can be translated as "defense" or as simply "explain" or "give an answer", why might a posture of trying to



win an argument not be as helpful as telling your story? When might offering 'reasons' in a logical format be most appropriate for a conversation with a friend?

Practice It

In the message we saw a few key ideas for sharing our story in a way that communicates our hope in Christ. Read through the following elements of a story, and then take the time to consider how you could learn to tell yours as a story.

Stories have three main parts: The *introduction*, *body*, and *climax*. There are also these key moments between those parts that connect them together – defining the mission comes after the introduction and the 'bridge' between the body and climax. So, it goes like this:

1. The **"Introduction"**, this where we meet the main character.
2. Between the Intro and the body, there is the "definition of the mission" – what the main character is searching for, aiming at – the mission of the story.
3. The **"Body"** is where the main character overcomes obstacles, and the plot builds toward the conclusion.



4. There is this “bridge” before we get to the climax – usually a moment of conflict or crisis, or an ‘ah-ha’ moment that sets up for the conclusion.
5. At the “**Climax**” is where the main character achieves the mission – or a modified version of it.
6. There is usually a “Denouement” where the main character experiences a ‘new normal’ – we are given a glimpse into a new world that they inhabit.

In the message we saw how Paul narrates his own story in a way that follows a similar pattern, speaking of his life of seeking to persecute Christians out of what he thought was love for God, and where he encounters Jesus in a way that reorients his life and purpose. We also saw how the Gospels in the New Testament tells Jesus’ own story in a similar pattern as well.

I would encourage everyone in your Life Group to read through the following and do the following exercise as homework – preparing to ‘give an answer’ that includes sharing your own story.

I think that writing the main ideas down is very helpful, although you would probably never read this out to someone. The process of writing it down might help you think more carefully and clearly about what you might share.

Steps for preparing your story

Step One: Introduce yourself and define your mission (1-2 paragraphs)

Give some of the important background for people to know. We might ask ourselves as we prepare this section questions like: Who are we? What drives us? What is our mission in life? What are we looking for, to ultimately fulfill us? What happy ending are we looking for?

For example:

“I was a pastor’s kid, and I thought I had to be perfect...perfect at home, at school, at my piano lessons, this led me to think that I always...”

“I came from a broken home where I heard awful things said to me on a regular basis. I always tried to smooth things over, and was desperately trying to make sure nothing would ever hurt me, so I developed a pattern of...”

Step Two: How you worked toward your mission (2-3 paragraphs)

What were you searching for before coming to Christ or before this significant shift in your relationship with Christ? What were the key problems, emotions, or attitudes you were dealing with (i.e., anger, pride, control, selfishness)? How did you try to satisfy your inner needs (i.e., of loneliness, fear of death, insecurity)?

And at the heart of these desires are legitimate, God given drives. The “body” section is a place to give concrete, strong **examples**, and **events** about specific ways that we pursued this mission or these goals.

Step Three: Describe the “crisis” or “ah-ha” moment and the climax of your story (2-3 paragraphs)

In this section we describe some of the following:

- a. What circumstances brought you to the place where you recognized your need for him? Be specific about either the internal sense of crisis and God’s work in you, or a specific event that led you to receive Christ or experience his work in you in a new and fresh way.
- b. How has your new life in Christ made a difference in you? How has his forgiveness impacted your thoughts and emotions? Share what it means for you to have a relationship with him now. Avoid being unrealistic and saying things like, “Everything is just perfect.” Be honest about how you are growing in Christ and where you have found him faithful, even, or especially in the hard stuff of real life.

We should be prepared to share our story at different lengths – 1-2 minutes; 5-10 minutes; 15 minutes. We can vary the number of details based on the context and the person we are speaking with and the setting.

I would encourage each person in your Life Group to take an hour or so (of your week) to write out a full version of this story. If time allows, have each group member who wants, to share a **2-3-minute version** of their story.

Prayer

With your group of family, ask God to use your story for his glory, including all the challenging parts, and even the parts that are still challenging. Take time to pray for those 3-4 people God has brought across your path, that you might have opportunities to build relationship, and that you might have a chance to listen well to their story, and, as God provides opportunity, to share your story.

