



this is
my story



Session

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LEADER GUIDE

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Leader Guide

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Georgia Baptist Student Groups and Faith Development

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Session

Session 4 – How to Share Your Story

Note to Leaders: Throughout this Leader Guide you will find illustrations for each of the main points in the sessions. These are only suggestions. Feel free to use whichever illustrations you think will be helpful. Add in your own illustrations as you see fit. The best illustrations are those from your own personal experience. It's also a good idea to begin each session with a story, illustration, or activity to grab the attention of your students as you launch into the lesson.

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Session Four



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Georgia Baptist
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Development

Session Four

How to Share Your Story

About this Session: You will help students write out their personal salvation story and learn how to share their personal story of salvation with others.

LOOK AT THE BOOK

In **1 Peter 3:15-16**, Peter says, “*In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.*” In this session I want to help you be prepared to tell others your own story about how you met Jesus and how He has changed your life. One of the greatest tools that we have been given by the Holy Spirit in witnessing to others is our own story of life change. People may argue about things such as doctrine, the Bible, and religion but they can’t argue with your own first-hand experience. First, I want to help you work through the different parts of your personal story and then at the end of this session, I’m going to give you time to write it out. Let’s get started!

First, I want us to read the Apostle Paul’s testimony as he was telling his personal story to King Agrippa in Acts 26:9-23. Listen for three parts of his story -his life before Christ, how he came to know Christ, and his service to Christ after coming to know Christ.

Acts 26:9-23

My Life Before Christ

9 “I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. 11 And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

How I Came to Know Christ

12 “In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. 13 At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. 14 And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ 15 And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16 But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, 17 delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you 18 to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

My Life After Christ

19 "Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,
20 but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea,
and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with
their repentance.

21 For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.

22 To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small
and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass:

23 that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim
light both to our people and to the Gentiles."

Using Paul's model as a guide, here are the three key elements of an effective faith story:

1. MY LIFE BEFORE CHRIST

This should be the shortest part of your story. Make sure that you don't glorify your old life in a way that makes you look like you miss being lost without Christ. At the end of this portion of your testimony, share how you realized that you needed a change in your life. When thinking about writing this part of your story, ask yourself these questions:

- What about my life before coming to know Jesus will relate most to the unbelievers I know?
- What did my life revolve around? Where did I get my security, identity or happiness from?
- How did those things begin to let me down?

2. HOW I CAME TO KNOW CHRIST

Talk about the events surrounding your conversion experience as best you can remember such as location, who was involved, who influenced you, and who was praying for you. When thinking about writing this part of your story, ask yourself these questions:

- When was the first time I heard the good news about Jesus and how did respond at first?
- When and why did my attitude toward Jesus change?
- What were the biggest struggles that I experienced before I accepted Him? Why did I finally make the decision to follow Jesus?

3. THE DIFFERENCE THAT CHRIST HAS MADE IN MY LIFE

Share about your life having purpose, direction, and joy. Talk about reconciled relationships, answered prayers, strength to overcome problems, and ministries you are involved in. When thinking about writing this part of your story, ask yourself these questions:

- How is my life different now? How has my attitude, desires, and habits changed?
- What motivates me now to live differently? What is my purpose?
- Even though I still mess up, how does knowing Christ help me keep going?

Your faith story is powerful because it describes a personal experience that happened to you – it's unique. It is relevant and not outdated. It allows the person listening to your story an opportunity to examine their own life to see whether they've been changed by faith in Christ like you have. Here are some helpful hints as you prepare to write out your story.

- Before writing out your story and sharing it with someone else, ask God for wisdom and the words to say.

- Write the way you speak. Don't use big words you usually don't use. Don't try to impress, just express what has happened to you.
- Be honest and real. Don't make up stuff that isn't true.
- Try to keep your story around two to three minutes.
- Practice saying your story out loud several times until you feel good about telling it to someone else.

Remember, when you tell your story, God is the One who is responsible for changing hearts. You are simply called to be ready and to share what God has done in your life.

What if you have come to faith in Christ at an early age?

Using Paul's model for sharing your testimony is especially fitting if you have come to know Christ as a teenager or adult. Paul experienced a dramatic conversion at an unforgettable moment in his life after years of walking in sin. But, what if you grew up going to church? What if your salvation experience took place when you were a young child? If this was the case, you can still follow Paul's model for sharing your story. Here's how.

Regardless of when you accepted Christ, there is still a time when you didn't have faith in Christ. You may not remember much about it, but you can still share about how you grew up, your family life, and your journey to faith. The key is to include WHY you decided to place your faith in Christ and trust Him for salvation. Think about what Jesus promised you that you didn't have without Him. Some examples might include a personal relationship with God, forgiveness for the selfish attitude and actions you had before Christ, forgiveness of any future sins you might commit, eternal life, joy, peace, Holy Spirit in your heart and life, desire to know God better, etc.

Another tip would be to focus on what Christ means to you now, and describe what you imagine your life would be like without him. After describing this clearly, simply point back to the fact that you wouldn't have this Jesus in your life if He hadn't made your relationship with him possible through his death on the cross.

If you came to know Christ at an early age, don't be disappointed that you don't have a gripping, over-the-top testimony. Don't feel like you somehow missed out. Instead, be grateful that you won't have to tell about how sin wrecked your life and wreaked havoc on those around you before God rescued you.

Illustration: In the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens, Greece, the American women's 4 x 100 relay race was favored to win the gold medal. The team featured Marion Jones, a sprinter who had won four gold medals at the previous games in Sydney. The American team was already off to a strong start when Jones took the baton for the second leg of the race. She gained ground as she ran her 100 meters and approached Lauryn Williams, a young speedster who would run the third leg.

Williams began running as Jones drew near, but when she reached back to receive the baton, they couldn't complete the handoff. Once, twice, three times Jones thrust the baton forward, but each time it missed William's hand—she couldn't seem to wrap her fingers around it. Finally, on the fourth try, they made the connection. But by that time, they had run out of the 20-yard exchange zone and were disqualified. Everyone knew they were the fastest team on the track. The night before, they'd had the fastest qualifying time. But when they couldn't complete the handoff, their race was over. We must learn to "hand-off" our story to others to help others across the finish line of faith.

TALKBACK QUESTIONS

Write out your personal testimony using the three sections that were discussed in the large group session. Then, practice telling your story with others. You will not have room to include everything. Be brief and include only the highlights.

MY LIFE BEFORE CHRIST - (Spend the least amount of your time in this section)

HOW I CAME TO KNOW CHRIST - (Spend the second most amount of your time in this section)

THE DIFFERENCE THAT CHRIST HAS MADE IN MY LIFE (Spend most of your time in this section)

Prayer: Ask God to bring someone to mind — a friend, a family member or an acquaintance — who doesn't yet know Him. Then pray for God to draw that person to Himself. Ask God to help you see and take the opportunities He provides to share your story.

Endnotes

¹ Our Daily Bread

² Craig Brian Larson, " 'The Fridge' Gets New Teeth," Preachingtoday.com; source: "A Story with Some Teeth," Chicago Tribune (December 20, 2007)

³ Jim Fitzgerald, "Doc Stops Surgery to Give Own Blood to Patient," LiveScience.com (May 26, 2006)

⁴ Houston Chronicle, November 16, 1998, p. 9A.

⁵ Bryan Wilkerson, "From Generation to Generation," PreachingToday.com