

The Compass

a tool for disciplers



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

Sharing Your Story

Conversation On the Journey

We all love to listen to a good story. Throughout the ages, stories have been used to entertain, correct, and instruct. Bards and minstrels entertained the masses as they journeyed. Jesus understood the power of the story (His parables) and used it effectively to teach profound truths.

Every time we tell our story, our testimony, we give honor and glory to God. And He is pleased with that. Why? Well, our story is actually the story of how God rescued us...saved us. It's the eye-witness (or 'I-witness') account of how our lives have changed. It's the story of His pursuit of a lost, helpless, hell-bound soul (you!) and the dramatic rescue to tear you from the clutches of the mortal enemy and bring you safely into His eternal kingdom. It's the stuff movies are made of. And that retelling of your redemption highlights His character. That's what we call "glorifying God"... giving Him credit, highlighting His character, and acknowledging His work.

We like to think that because it's our story, we don't have to put any effort into telling it. We were there when it happened, and we're living it now. But it's easy to get jumbled, flustered, off the point, and onto a tangent that can distract, bore, annoy, or confuse your listener. We want to glorify God and be listener-friendly. That's why a little planning and practice are so valuable when helping your disciple prepare their story. You get to help them discover their story, and when they've learned to communicate it well, it can become an effective tool for evangelism.

Preparing to Share Your Story

There are five basic parts of "Your Story": the opening, your life before Christ, how you came to Christ, your life after Christ, and the closing. And your disciple should be able to talk through all five parts clearly and succinctly within 3-5 minutes. Even the talkative disciples! Let's take a look at how to put it together, section by section.

The Opening. Identify a theme. What did your life revolve around that God used to help bring you to Him? Try to illustrate your theme with a word picture that your audience can identify with.

Your Life Before Christ. You want to paint a picture of what your life was like before you came to Christ, but don't dwell on how bad you used to be or glory in past sin. Share only the details that relate to your theme, and give enough details to show your need for Christ. This is not the time to give your resume.

This Week's Excursion

Our culture is heavily influenced by stories. Everyone has a story to tell: the story of his or her life journey. Today you want to help your disciple understand:

- The power of stories.
- How his spiritual journey is a story that people want to hear.
- How it can be used to draw others to Christ while giving Him glory.



How You Came to Christ. Ah, this is it. Make sure you speak in such a way that the person you are talking with, and anyone who overhears you, can understand how you became a Christian, and how they can become a Christian too. Give only the details that are important to communicate why and how you became a Christian.

This is an educational aspect to your story, so that even if your listener is not interested right now, he'll be able to make that decision down the road because you've equipped him with the right information.

Your Life After Christ. Share some of the changes that Christ has made in your life as they relate to your theme. Emphasize the changes in your character, attitude, and perspective, not just the mere changes in behavior.

And be realistic. We still struggle as Christians. Life is far from perfect, isn't it? But what makes it different for you now? Be honest, and God will use your personal experience regardless of how "unspectacular" you may think it is.

The Closing. Close it out with a summary statement that ties your story together according to your theme. You could close with a verse, but don't throw one in to sound spiritual. Use it if it is meaningful and relates to the story you've just told.

Some Helpful Hints for Sharing Your Story

- We all need practice to become good at a skill or sport. And telling your story is no different. Actually write your story, and edit it. Be specific and give enough details to capture attention and paint a picture, but leave the gory details out.
- Don't mention any denominations: that can alienate someone listening to you. Making any kind of statement that reflects poorly on churches, organizations, or other people can reflect poorly on you.
- Be natural...and that means practice! Be confident in what you are going to say, and know the outline so that you can keep it flowing even if interrupted for questions.
- Now that you are a Christian, you probably have adopted some new vocabulary. Be aware of this "Christian-ese" when you speak. Words like: saved, sanctified, sin, justified, atonement, wonderful, joyful, peaceful, and happy, can cause confusion, so be ready to explain, or just avoid these words.

Remember the K.I.S.S. principle from high school speech class? Keep It Short and Simple. You should be able to share your story in 3-5 minutes. Any longer than that and your audience may feel like you are taking advantage of them. And who wants to listen to you for that long, anyway?

End 

Next Steps

On the next page is a work sheet that will help your disciple prepare their story. Help your disciple think through each category by asking questions. Work on it a little bit together, and next week have your disciple practice it with you. Be sure to give good, critical feedback to refine and improve. And don't forget to time it!

Encourage your disciple to use their story often with their friends in class and to practice it in Bible study. Maybe you can help your disciple tell their story at Cru.

Together, you could ask different people for their stories during today's appointment. If they are believers, you could discuss the story afterwards to learn from it. If the storyteller is not a believer, you could reciprocate by telling your story and modeling to your disciple the benefits of a 3-5 minute story. Then your disciple could practice telling their story. And that's evangelism, too!

Side Trails

The Power of Story. Leighton Ford. NavPress.

Order from christianbook.com

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Story Worksheet

The Opening

What did your life revolve around that God used to help bring you to Him? What were some of your values and priorities?

What word picture could you use?

Life Before Christ

What details do we need to understand?

How you Came to Christ

How'd it happen?

What's the basic Gospel message that anyone needs to understand?

Life After Receiving Christ

What are some of the changes in your character, attitude and behavior?

Closing

Summarize and tie it all together with your opening.