

## TELLING YOUR GOSPEL STORY

*"We are creatures of story, created by a storytelling God, who created the very fabric of our reality in terms of His story. Rather than seeing our existence as a series of unconnected random events without purpose, storytelling brings meaning to our lives through the analogy of carefully crafted plot that reflects the loving sovereignty of the God of the Bible." --Brian Godawa, award-winning filmmaker*

Understanding God's Story is essential for properly interpreting the Creation-Fall-Redemption-Restoration elements in our own story. Though we regularly believe that our stories are about us, our stories are really about God. "In him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

Your story is ultimately God's Story. It's by him and about him. Your story is good news, a story about God's redemption of a broken person. He is the main character and the hero, not you. "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever." (Romans 11:36).

### LOGISTICS: WHAT TO DO

1. Take out a sheet of paper and write your story with three parts: 1) your life before Jesus, 2) how you met Jesus, and 3) your life since Jesus.
2. Practice reading your story out loud three times. Close your eyes and recite your story from memory.
3. Ask three Christian friends to listen to your story. Invite them to give you feedback on how to improve. See if you can do it better each time.

*NOTE: more tips below.*

### YOUR GUIDE: HOW TO DO IT

Think through the four elements of your story as enumerated below, and consider how each one is an opportunity to point to your need for God and his work. Our stories consist of a countless string of smaller scenes, so begin by praying and asking the Holy Spirit to show you which parts you should include in your gospel story.

#### Creation

We all have a fundamental belief about our origin—who or what gave us our existence, made us who we are, and shaped us into the person we are today. God's Story begins with him bringing everything into existence. He is the author and main character of the Story, and all things find their worth in him.

And yet, all of us have looked to someone or something other than God to define us, to give us a sense of worth and value. As you begin your gospel story, talk about your background, some early shaping influences, and what gave you your sense of worth and value.

- Key Themes: Origin, Identity
- Key Gospel Question: Who or what most shaped your understanding of yourself? What were the sources of your sense of personal value and identity?

- Other questions to consider:
  - Where were you born, and what was going on in your family at the time?
  - Talk about your relationships with your family members (parents, siblings, or other important people).
  - Early on, who and what were some of the main influences in your life?
  - What did you believe about God?

## Fall

The world we live in is not as it should be. We are not as we should be. Brokenness is all around us. We have deeply held convictions about why things are broken. We often tend to place the blame at the feet of others: parents, siblings, friends, teachers, leaders, and even the government.

God's Story shows us that our own sin is the primary thing that wreaks havoc on our lives. As you tell your gospel story, talk about specific ways that your sin brought about pain and destruction in your life. Include failed attempts at fixing the brokenness in your life.

- Key Themes: Brokenness, Blame
- Key Gospel Question: How was your relationship with God and others not the way God created it to be? Why?
- Other questions to consider:
  - What were some of your most painful experiences?
  - How did you respond to the pain?
  - What was broken in your life? Relationships? Behavior? Attitudes? Health?
  - Who was to blame for this brokenness?
  - How did you try to fix the brokenness? Were those efforts effective?

## Redemption

All of us look to created things to save us, to rescue us, to give us significance, and to make us right. Money, possessions, acceptance, approval, relationships, and achievements all seem to offer some hope for repairing the brokenness in our lives. Education, government, recreation, and self-fulfillment can grab our attention as potential saviors too. But the gospel tells a different story! The Redemption element of your story has the potential to be very powerful because you get to declare your faith in Jesus as the One who has saved and rescued you. Talk specifically about how you placed your trust in Jesus to save and rescue from your sin and from the brokenness in your life. Describe how Jesus's life, death, and resurrection have brought redemption to specific broken parts of your story.

- Key Themes: Rescue, Deliverance
- Key Gospel Question: How has Jesus redeemed and rescued you through his death on the cross? How did you come to put your faith and trust in Him to save you and restore your life to the way God intended it to be?
- Other questions to consider:
  - What people or things failed to rescue you?
  - How did the Spirit lead you to put your faith in Jesus? Did he use people, the Bible, a supernatural experience, difficult circumstances, a powerful message?
  - What were some of the effects of your belief in Jesus?

- How did you begin to experience God restoring you back to the way you were originally created?

### Restoration

There's a deep longing within each of us for change, for things to be different tomorrow than they are today. For some, this means finding a job or spouse. Others hope for world peace and a fair distribution of resources, a Utopian society. The desire to "have it all" is a longing that many share. What we're all craving is a mending of the brokenness that surrounds us. We want restoration, but we want it to look a certain way.

Because of what Jesus has done, restoration has begun. We are a new creation, and we've been made right with the Father! In God's Story, restoration means that his image bearers begin to live in the way they were originally create to live. His Spirit lives in and through us, making us more like Jesus, even though we are still living in a fallen, broken world. Conclude your gospel story by talking about what the Spirit is doing in your life now. Share some evidences of his grace, indicators that you've been made new, that his restorative work has already begun in you.

- Key Themes: Hope, Transformation
- Key Gospel Question: What has changed and is changing in your life now? Who and what is the focus of your life today?
- Other questions to consider:
  - What are you hoping will change next week, month, year, 10 years?
  - Who is the focus of your preferred version of the future?
  - What are some specific ways you've seen the Spirit make you more like Jesus (consider the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23)? Examine restoration in your attitude, your behavior, and your relationships, and be as specific as you can.
  - What aspect of the new heavens and new earth are you most excited about?

### A FEW STORY TIPS

- Make your story about 10 minutes long. (Prepare to tell the short version in 1-2 minutes.)
- Use normal, everyday language to tell your story. Try to avoid religious vocabulary that your non-Christian friend might have trouble understanding.
- The Father already knows your story and accepts you fully because of Jesus, so you can be totally honest with others. Don't fear what people might think.
- Practice telling your story with close friends and family so you will be prepared when needed. Invite them to give you feedback on how to improve. See if you can do better each time.
- Be prepared to share your gospel story in the midst of spiritual conversations with not-yet-believers. Anytime the conversation turns to God, Jesus, Church or the Bible, it might be a great opportunity to share how Jesus is the hero of your story.
- Pray and ask the Spirit to speak through you as you tell your story.

Remember, it's actually his story!