



# SHARING YOUR FAITH STORY

## WEEK 1

Lent is a 40-day (not counting Sundays) timeframe leading up to Easter. It's a time for self-reflection, confession, prayer, and rooting ourselves in the good news of Jesus Christ. Some people choose to give up something and give towards a charitable cause as a symbol of the sacrifice Jesus made on their behalf. Those are great ideas. However, the best things we could give are our words as we share the good news of Jesus with others. This study and its 5 devotions per week are intended to not only help us understand the good news, but also how to share it with others. It's easier than you may think. "Don't Worry, Just Say It."

**DON'T WORRY, JUST SAY IT**

# SHARING YOUR FAITH STORY

## DAY 1

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*“So when they arrest you and hand you over, don’t worry beforehand what you will say. On the contrary, whatever is given to you in that hour—say it. For it isn’t you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.” (Mark 13:11)*

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In the final week of His earthly life, Jesus actively sought to prepare His disciples for what was to come after His death and resurrection. It was a crucial part of His plan for them to be His witnesses, to speak up about what they knew to be true about Jesus. He also knew they wouldn’t be able to help it as their pending experience would compel them to talk about what they had seen and heard (Acts 4:20). This would undoubtedly bring them into the public eye, which can be both an intimidating and dangerous place to be. Given that, He assured them that they shouldn’t hesitate out of worry, but should speak their piece, and in that moment, God would equip them to say everything that needed to be said. As it turned out, Jesus was a prophet (no surprise there). The Apostles quickly began to boldly witness to all they knew and saw. And just as quickly they found themselves standing before the tribunal.

But Jesus’ encouragement in Mark 13:11 is as much for us as them. A vital part of His plan for the sharing of the Gospel today is for us to speak up about what we know and have experienced. And our experience of God’s grace should likewise compel us, as it did the Apostles, to eagerly talk about all we have seen and heard. But statistics show us that most professing Christians don’t talk about their faith out of fear. In this, Jesus’s encouragement not to worry about what we will say in those moments should be comforting and empowering. Even though the only court we may ever appear in as a witness for Christ is the court of public or personal opinion, we don’t have to hesitate in speaking up because God will give us exactly what we should say.

So, don’t worry, fulfill Jesus’ plan and just say it! One way to do so is to let the Holy Spirit prep you in advance by actually writing out your personal testimony. The “experts” suggest keeping it to 3-5 minutes...about 1.5 pages, since it is always easier in the moment to expand rather than compress our story. Over the next few days we will be joining the Apostle Paul as he tells his story in the Temple in Jerusalem before a hostile crowd in Acts 22. His story will highlight the vital elements we need to share about our story. So be ready each day to take some notes as the Spirit prompts and before you know it you will have your story ready to share! And then...don’t worry, just say it!

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## DAY 2

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*“Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense before you.”<sup>2</sup> When they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew language, they became even quieter.<sup>3</sup> He continued, “I am a Jewish man, born in Tarsus of Cilicia but brought up in this city<sup>[a]</sup> at the feet of Gamaliel and educated according to the strict view of our patriarchal law. Being zealous for God, just as all of you are today,<sup>4</sup> I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women in jail,<sup>5</sup> as both the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify about me. After I received letters from them to the brothers, I traveled to Damascus to bring those who were prisoners there to be punished in Jerusalem.” (Acts 22:1-5)*

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Yesterday we reflected on Jesus’ promise that the Holy Spirit will make us experts in what to say when as His witness/follower we find ourselves smack dab in the middle of the court of personal/public opinion. When you think about it, God has already fulfilled this promise in our lives in one fashion. All of us are experts in our own story...our own journey of faith in Jesus. That is exactly what Paul does in Acts 22 when he is forced into the limelight in the Temple in Jerusalem. He tells his story.

Your story...the account of your journey of faith has power. It is authentic and it communicates. But there are parts of your story you need to emphasize in order to utilize its full potential. You need to focus on the elements that matter most. One of those is what your life was like before you met Christ. That is exactly what the Apostle Paul does in Acts 22:1-6. He spoke about his life before meeting Christ. He was a keeper of the most strident understanding of the law and was a persecutor of The Way, even being active in their executions. He was talking about his life before he started following Christ.

In telling your story, you need to be clear about what your life was like before you met Christ? It might have been a long time ago. Or just recently. What aspects of it do you think people need to know and understand in order to appreciate what God has done in you. Take a moment right now, in the effort to be ready and eager to just Say It, to jot down the characteristics that seem most pertinent to you. Ask God to guide you as you do so.

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## DAY 3

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*“As I was traveling and near Damascus, about noon an intense light from heaven suddenly flashed around me. <sup>7</sup> I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ <sup>8</sup> “I answered, ‘Who are You, Lord?’ “He said to me, ‘I am Jesus the Nazarene, the One you are persecuting!’ <sup>9</sup> Now those who were with me saw the light, but they did not hear the voice of the One who was speaking to me.” (Acts 22:6-9)*

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In Acts 22 Paul continued to tell his story. He had already shared what his life had been like before he came to faith in Christ. Now he shares how he realized he needed to follow Christ. This is the second element that we need to communicate clearly for our personal testimony to have its greatest power: how we realized we needed Christ.

Don't be discouraged that your experience isn't quite as dramatic as Paul's Damascus road experience. Being met by the risen Christ in a blaze of glory is pretty powerful, but that is what it took to cut through the intense misunderstanding Paul had about Christ. But a lack of drama doesn't mean a lack of power. Your story, your journey to faith, has power. Part of the way you unleash that power is to make it clear how you came to recognize your need for Christ.

What did God use to convict you about Christ? Was there a particular scripture that He used to pursue your heart? Was it something a friend said to you? Was it a particularly difficult time in your life? Were you confronted with your own sinfulness in some way? Whatever it was, make sure you can articulate it the best you can as you tell your story. Take a few minutes now and reflect on that time and jot down a few things you remember. Ask God to guide you. Then ask God to use it soon.

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## DAY 4

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*“Then I said, ‘What should I do, Lord?’ “And the Lord told me, ‘Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told about everything that is assigned for you to do.’<sup>11</sup> “Since I couldn’t see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus. <sup>12</sup> Someone named Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good reputation with all the Jews residing there, <sup>13</sup> came and stood by me and said, ‘Brother Saul, regain your sight.’ And in that very hour I looked up and saw him. <sup>14</sup> Then he said, ‘The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear the sound of His voice.’” (Acts 22:10-14)*

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Paul hit it right on the head. When someone realizes that they need Christ, the question they need to ask is “What should I do?” You can help others know the answer to that question by telling them what you did. Remember, we are talking about how God has made you an expert witness for Him because you are an expert on your own story of coming to know Him. Tell your story.

In preparing to tell your story, to engage in being a witness, think through the exact things you did to become a follower of Christ. Did you say a prayer? Did someone lead you in that prayer? Did your prayer acknowledge your sin before God? Did you ask for forgiveness and confess that you were placing your faith in Christ? Did you start reading the Bible? Did you find a Church? Were you baptized? Take a few minutes now and write down the things you remember doing in responding to the Gospel.

A bit of review, the core elements in your story that need to be told are:

- What your life was like before you met Christ.
- How you came to recognize you needed Christ.
- How you received Christ.

Remember to ask God to guide you. And don’t be afraid to speak up!

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# SHARING YOUR FAITH STORY

## DAY 5

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*For you will be a witness for Him to all people of what you have seen and heard. <sup>16</sup> And now, why delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins by calling on His name.’ <sup>17</sup> “After I came back to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple complex, I went into a visionary state <sup>18</sup> and saw Him telling me, ‘Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me!’ <sup>19</sup> “But I said, ‘Lord, they know that in synagogue after synagogue I had those who believed in You imprisoned and beaten. <sup>20</sup> And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I was standing by and approving, and I guarded the clothes of those who killed him.’ <sup>21</sup> “Then He said to me, ‘Go, because I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’” (Acts 22:15-21)*

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In this last section of Paul’s testimony in the Temple before a riled-up crowd eager to protect the faith of the Jews, Paul began to speak about his life since he started following Christ. Unfortunately, he didn’t get to get very far before the crowd rioted after he mentioned the Gentiles. But he gives us just enough to highlight the final element we need to stress in our story: what our life has been like since we started following Christ in faith.

Be open and be honest. Don’t fail to speak about the ways that God has changed you for the better. But also, don’t hesitate to be honest about the progress you still need to make. Celebrate what is good but also acknowledge what still isn’t great. Remember the power is not in your “perfection” but in how the Holy Spirit uses what you say. So be honest as God doesn’t want to use a lie. Take a moment now and write down a few adjectives that come to mind that describe your life since you became a Christ follower.

In this first week of Lent, we have focused on how God has in some ways already fulfilled His promise to give us exactly what we need to say when we are in the spotlight of the court of public opinion: Our Story. And the crucial elements we need to share to unleash the impact of our story are 1) our life before Christ, 2) how we came to know that we needed Christ, 3) how we received Christ, and 4) what life has been like with Christ.

Let me encourage you to take some time in the next day or two to write out your story. Try to keep it to 2 pages or less. You can always easily expand it. Shortening it is always harder. And remember...it’s your story. Its authentic and powerful. God will use it. So, get ready to share it.

Begin to pray for the people you sense God wants you to share your story with: Your One!

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