

A photograph of a person's lower half, wearing a white robe with a fringed hem, walking barefoot on a sandy path. The person's feet are visible, and the robe is slightly lifted as they walk. The background is a textured, brownish ground.

SHARING **JESUS** STORIES

A Short Guide for Gaining Confidence
in Sharing Stories about Jesus

INTRODUCTION

I'm so glad you've picked up this booklet and are considering how to grow in sharing Jesus stories: stories about Jesus and stories Jesus told! This booklet will help you internalize a story of Jesus. With it, you'll be ready to share that story when the Spirit prompts, and you will be planting the seeds of the gospel in peoples hearts! Let's go!

SELECTING A JESUS STORY

Choose a story from the Gospels or Acts. Pay attention to what has been sticking with you recently. Look for one that seems to light up your soul. Or, ask God: "What story would You have me share?"

Write below a few stories that come to mind:

OBSERVING THE JESUS STORY

Read the story a few times silently and aloud. Listen to it being read by someone or an audio bible. Once you've read and heard the story a few times (three or more), reflect on the following questions:

- What do I like about this story?
- What bothers me about this story?
- Who are the characters and what are their roles in the story?
- What does the story say about God?
- What does the story say about people?

RESPONDING TO THE JESUS STORY

Think about and observe how this story of Jesus affects you:

- What is the behavior of Jesus I am called to cultivate?
- How does the story make me feel?
- Are there any characters I identify with?
- Are there details that have particular meaning for me or for our community?
- What parts do I not understand?
- Does this story make me want to change?
- Does this story make me think of someone to share it with?

INTERNALIZING THE JESUS STORY

Try handwriting the story a time or two. Something about handwriting helps us remember. The Israelite kings would need to each handwrite their own copy of the laws of God (see Deut 17:18-20). You may want to first copy the story from the Scriptures. Afterward, try writing the story outline from memory.

Use these questions to help you prepare to share your story naturally without memorizing it word-for-word but having it grasped in essence:

- What aspect of the story do I want to highlight?
- What details help make that point?
- What details seem confusing or less helpful?
- How do I introduce the story to different people in different contexts—dinner tables, casual conversations, different events?
- Have I put the story in words that are understandable, accurate, and interesting?

PRACTICING IN PRIVATE

Prepare to share this story with a group by sharing it with yourself and then with a few others.

If you'll be standing when sharing the story, stand when you share out loud to yourself. Try to mimic some of what you'll experience.

SHARING IN PUBLIC MEALS

Within our community meals, we are inviting people to participate in the worship of Jesus, as these meals are dedicated and in honor of Him. While each meal has a simple format; the meal holds spiritual force through the presence of the Holy Spirit. The notes below are a guide for what sharing a story in the community meal looks like.

Time/Length

Keep the story and sharing between 7-10 minutes. It's not about how long we talk; it is about the simple power of the Spirit present in the simple sharing of the stories and the discussions that may (or may not) follow.

Read & Retell (Restate)

Read the story from the Jesus Stories book (Gospels/Acts). Then, retell (restate) the story in your own words.

Reflect or Resonate

Relate or Resonate: Pick one or the other to offer to the group.

Reflect: Share how this story has affected your own life (found peace, gained boldness, received healing, a new outlook, etc). Offer to people your insights on the story (one main point/thought). Invite people to consider what the story is saying to them.

Resonate: This is to engage the group in sustained discussion and reflection. It is not meant to continue as a large group; it is meant to give people an opportunity to contribute, for each person to interact, and to be a continuing point of discussion if more of us would like to share. This is where conversation moves to tables and hopefully continues after the closing.

These sample questions will encourage people to think about, around, or into a story:

Emotional

- What were the characters feeling?
- How many of us have felt that way?

Imaginative

- What might they have continued saying to each other?
- What do you imagine the atmosphere was like?

Motivations

- Why do you suppose the characters responded the way that they did?

Discernment

- What sticks out from the story to you?
- What do you sense Jesus is saying to you?

So, remember, you are not teaching here. You may not have a predetermined application point or moral thought to add. That's ok! Instead of relating your insight, you can guide a group discussion. Maybe the Spirit will speak through the group discussion.

Reveal

Reveal how the story is meaningful in our lives and/or how Jesus' behavior stands out. Observe the meaning and behaviors and summarize them.

This is the point where you can add one point of "depth" from your studies (in a shortened format) to the meal. You can add a nuance of meaning, but make sure, that it connects with the behavior Jesus is calling us toward.

For instance, turning the other cheek was a way to make someone acknowledge you as their social equal (meaning). Jesus wants us to creatively resist evil in ways that honor Him and uphold righteousness (behavior).

Release

Release with a prayer of blessing, thankfulness, and worship. Try to let your prayer pour out of your soul (see John 4:14; 7:37-39, esp v38). Here are points to pray through:

- blessing to come upon those present.
- darkness to flee and light to come in.
- the nearness of Jesus to be present throughout our week.

- Include the elements of “bread” and “drink” in your prayer:
“Just as this food gives our bodies life, Jesus we recognize it is you who gives us true life. Just as these drinks quench our thirst for a moment, Jesus we grasp that it is only you who will satisfy our thirst so that we never thirst again.”

If praying before the meal, end by saying, “Amen. Let’s eat!” If praying after the meal, end by saying, “Amen. Let’s clean up and have a good night!” This clearly signals to the group either that it is time to eat or that it is time to bring the time to a close.

SHARING IN PRIVATE CONVERASTIONS

Name

If Jesus knows our name and if we represent Jesus, we should know people’s names. It’s easy: “Hi! My name is... What’s your name?”

Life

Small Talk: Weather or Whatever...

Sample Questions: How’s your day? What’d you do this week? What do you do for fun? What do you enjoy doing? What’s a normal day?

Limits

Affirm

Affirm their hardship; affirm their feelings. Feelings are felt, period. Pain is real. One of the fastest ways to turn someone way: “You shouldn’t feel that way. Let me tell you why...” Instead, you can have empathy and affirm someone’s feelings even if you disagree with their actions.

Restate

Tell their story back to them in your words. You are looking for them to affirm that you understand their story. Let them correct you if you misunderstand. This shows you are listening and that you care.

Relate

Identify with the hardship/limitation they feel. You likely do not know exactly what they’re going through. But, you may have an idea of something similar. And if you do not have a way to relate, say that too! For example, you could say, “While I haven’t had it hard like you in that way, I can relate how its hard like this...”

Resonate

Ask if you can share a story with them about your hardship that resonates with theirs. This is not about your story overcoming theirs or turning the conversation to focus on you. This is about sharing stories and become mutual friends, equal with one another.

Stories

When stories begin to be shared, people will begin revealing their spirituality. This is where we can begin to reveal Jesus. Here are two ways in conversation to share stories of Jesus.

Reflecting

Here is where you can share a story of Jesus by reflecting on how it has impacted you and your response to it. This is not only describing what Jesus did in your life. This is sharing one of His stories but then also sharing how it affected your own life, even summarizing in one point that you took away. This type of story sharing is focused on you and your interactions/testimony; it is not telling others what to do.

Revealing

At this point, you may be able to share a specific story of Jesus to their scenario. Begin by asking: there is another story of Jesus that comes to my mind with your scenario, can I share it? If they say yes, then great! If they say no, then wait for another opportunity to ask again later.

Specifics

Sample Questions: What is this story saying to you? What is Jesus saying to you? Can I pray with you? How can I help you? You said you sensed Jesus saying this last week, how'd that go?

FINAL THOUGHTS

Sharing isn't to be flashy or elegant. Instead, your sharing should be aligned with the Apostle Paul's approach: "preaching the Good News, not with clever speech, for fear that the cross of Christ might lose its power," while trusting that the Good News about Jesus is "the power of God" (1 Cor 1:17-18, 24; Rom 1:16). Be at ease, even the mighty Apostle Paul when sharing Jesus stories did with a type of queasy stomach. Don't take my word for it, here's his:

“When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn’t use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God’s secret plan. For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified. I came to you in weakness —timid and trembling. And my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit. I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God” (1 Co 2:1–5 NLT).

So, you can see that Paul used simple words, focused exclusively on Jesus, came with weakness and timidity, and trusted in the power of the Spirit of God to move upon people’s hearts through the stories about Jesus. Therefore, our goal is not to teach everything (or maybe anything) that someone needs to know. Instead, **our goal is to introduce people to Jesus and let Jesus do His work.**

Please understand: If we focus on telling people about Jesus or teaching a point, then we want people to know a fact. If we focus on introducing Jesus by sharing His stories, then we are providing the space where people can ask questions and move one step closer to Jesus. Additionally, we are remembering Jesus by sharing His stories.

So remember: **The stories of Jesus (the Good News / the Gospel) is what does the work in the people** – not our explanations and mastery of telling it. Therefore, be yourself. You’ll probably be nervous. That’s ok. You might feel physically ill. That could be intense nerves or spiritual opposition. Push through your discomfort by getting the stories of Jesus inside of you so that they can flow out of you. And don’t worry, if you’re sharing in a community meal and everyone doesn’t stop talking when you start talking, just keep ahead! I doubt as Paul was preaching in the marketplaces, that everyone stopped and gave their full attention. But some gave attention to him; and some will to you.

"And, that’s about it! But please do not confuse simplicity with frailty. The power is not in your presentation but in how Jesus reveals Himself to people’s hearts from His own stories. You will be long done in your sharing, but the story will still be pulsating in the souls of those who have ears to hear for weeks to come.”¹

¹ Fosner, Verlon. Story Priority: How to Change Lives Using the 468 Jesus Narratives (A Fresh Expressions Book) (p. 73). Kindle Edition.