

Sharing Your Story

Your Salvation Story

In Covenant Membership Class, you will be asked to spend about five minutes sharing your personal story. Don't be overwhelmed by this. We want to hear your story and what God has done in your life. This is a brief document that will give you some pointers and tips.

Everyone loves a good story because every good story echoes and longs for the truth. Your salvation story is no different. No matter the details, your salvation story is a good story. Each and every one contains the same parts:

This is not actually your salvation story; it's God's. the Triune God, sinful humanity, the crucified King, responsive faith and mission. The Triune God created us for His glory, but, in seeking our own, we were separated from Him. But God the Father sent His Son to die in our place for our sins so that, after rising from the dead and ascending to the right hand of the Father, sinners could respond to His gracious offer of salvation and receive power for the mission of bringing the kingdom of heaven to earth. If you have been saved, this is your story! But this is not actually *your* salvation story; it's God's.

Our stories of salvation are stories of change, but told in a way unlike the world speaks of change. Anyone can tell a story of: "I used to do *that*, until I encountered _____, and now I do *this*." Those stories say, "Look at how I've changed." But the Christian proclaims, "Look at how *He* changed me!" What makes your testimony distinct from the average story is your personal experience of what God has done to change you.

To create a simple outline of your story, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Before

- *What did my life revolve around?*
- *Where did I get my security or happiness from?*
- *How did these things begin to let me down?*

2. The Moment

- *What were my initial reactions to the gospel?*
- *When did my stance toward the gospel change?*

3. After

- *What is life like now?*
- *What are specific stories that illustrate the changes Christ has made in me?*

Tips

It can be intimidating to write out and present your salvation story, so here are a few encouragements and practical tips that may help:

It is normal to feel some fear about sharing your story. Remember:

- The Holy Spirit promises to empower us when we witness to His grace (Acts 1:8; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 2 Cor. 4:7).
- No matter how your story is received by others, faithfulness is sharing the gospel and leaving the results up to God (Matt. 13:1-9; 1 Cor. 3:7).
- We are motivated to share by our love for God (Ps. 96:3; Rom. 15:9) and compassion for others (Matt. 9:36).

Tell your story accurately, but sensitively.

- Don't give the cleaned-up, polished, social media version of your story. But do tell it in a way that "gives grace to all who hear" (Eph. 4:29).
- Think about who else's story is a part of yours (family members, friends, co-workers, neighbors). Be sure not to tell your story at someone else's expense.
- Resist the temptation to paint an overly rosy picture of your life post-salvation. The Christian life is one of ongoing struggle with temptation and sin, but now we have the Holy Spirit as our Helper.

It's okay not to have a "dramatic" testimony.

- Though their stories were completely different, God saved both Paul (Acts 26:12-18) and Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5).
- Just because you don't remember the exact time you were born doesn't mean you aren't alive; the same is true for being born-again.
- How have you grown in your understanding of what it means to follow Christ?
- Where is God at work in your life now?

Aim for your presentation to be around five minutes.

- The average person speaks at a rate of 110-150 words per minute, so when you write out your story, aim for approximately 330-1,200 words.
- Practice it out loud once or twice with a timer in hand.

Commit your story to memory so you are always ready to share (1 Pet. 3:15).

- Practice until it becomes natural to deliver and conversational in tone.
- Imagine sharing your story with someone in line for a concert or a sports game.

Talk in terms that your listeners will understand.

- Share a story, not a sermon.
- Use "I" and "me," not "you" and "they."
- Avoid "Christianese" (i.e. "prayed the prayer," "asked Jesus into my heart," "justified," "washed by the blood," etc.).

Limit your talking points purposefully.

- This is not a full-life inventory, but a focused expression of the gospel in your life.
- Ask yourself: Does this detail contribute to a greater understanding of God's grace in my life? If it doesn't, leave it out.