

Write Your Story

1 Corinthians 9:22-23 - *When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.*

As followers of Jesus, we know that the Lord has met us, saved us, and is transforming us. Thoughtfully sharing our story does at least three things for us: 1) It clarifies what we have embraced in Christ. When we work to describe our journey with the Lord, we learn to put into words what Christ has done for us; 2) It gives us confidence that our faith is sincere and real. Remembering our conversion is a spur to our faith when we hit seasons of discouragement and difficulty; and 3) It creates a pathway for others to hear and believe the gospel.

The apostle Paul used his experiences and parts of his story as pathways to share the truths of the gospel with unbelievers. The following questions will help you think through your story and put language to specific ways you have understood your sin, trusted Jesus, and experienced God's transforming work. As you write, include some concrete details that give your story texture and authenticity. As you use this exercise to draft your story, our hope is that you will be better equipped to share with others what God has done in your life.

APART FROM CHRIST

Romans 3:23 - *For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.*

Consider the following questions about your life apart from Christ:

1. What was your life like before Christ?
2. What was your view of the world?
3. What brought meaning to your life?
4. If you were raised in a Christian home, was there a moment faith in Christ became your faith and not simply your family's faith? What happened?
5. What are some ways you have tried to manage life apart from Christ?

Write two or three concrete sentences that describe your life apart from Christ.

UNDERSTANDING SIN

“Sin has brought about a guilty standing before God and a corrupted condition in all humans.” –Wayne Grudem

Colossians 3:5, 6 - *So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you.... Because of these sins, the anger of God is coming.*

Romans 5:12 - *When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam’s sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.*

Consider the following questions about sin:

1. When did you understand what sin is?
2. What is some of the damage sin had done in your life?
3. How did you come to understand that your sin was the real problem that kept you from God?
4. What are some sins that God has exposed and helped you turn from by trusting Jesus?

Write a sentence or two that describe how sin affected your life.

CHRIST’S SACRIFICE FOR SIN

Romans 5:6-8 - *When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*

1 Peter 2:24 - *He personally carried our sins in his body on the cross so that we can be dead to sin and live for what is right. By his wounds you are healed.*

Consider the following questions about Christ’s sacrifice:

1. Was there a particular season or moment you gained clarity around your relationship to God? If so, describe the circumstances surrounding that moment.
2. How did you come to realize that the cost of your salvation was so high that God had to come to pay the price Himself?
3. Who were the people in your life that played key roles in helping you understand the gospel?

Write a sentence or two that describe how you came to understand Christ's sacrifice.

FAITH AND REPENTANCE

Mark 1:15 - *"The time promised by God has come at last!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!"*

1 John 1:9 - *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Consider the following questions about faith and repentance:

1. When did you finally understand the weight of your sin and trust Christ as your savior?
2. In your words, describe what it means to transfer your confidence from your own efforts and righteousness to Christ's work and righteousness.
3. Was it painful or a relief to repent towards Christ and away from yourself? Why?
4. If you became a Christian at a young age, what circumstances in your life led you to start taking ownership over your faith? In what ways did it become real to you?

Write a sentence or two that describe how you repented and put your faith in Christ.

ONGOING FAITH

2 Corinthians 3:18 - *So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.*

Philippians 3:9-14 - ...I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, *II* so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead! I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

Consider the following questions about our ongoing faith:

1. How has Christ changed your life?
2. What are some ways you are learning to trust Jesus now?
3. How does your hope in Christ affect how you work, play, invest resources, and interact with others? How does biblical community help you remember your salvation?
4. If you have been through a difficult season, how has God's hand sustained you? How does your faith help you approach new struggles?

Write a sentence or two that describe your ongoing life with Christ.

Now, take your sentences from above and rewrite them into a draft of your story. We've included an example below to help give you some direction.

Sample Story

Growing up, I wasn't great at school, but had some success as an athlete so I spent most of my time and energy on sports. I wasn't quite good enough to play in college, so it was a shock to my system when all that was taken away from me.

I muddled my way through college and met Tracie my junior year. We got married right after graduation and James was born just before I turned 26. By then I was dealing with a low-grade disappointment in most of the areas of my life. My job was mediocre, my marriage wasn't great, and I sure didn't know how to be a father.

One night, James would not stop crying and I found myself getting angrier and angrier. Finally, about 1:30 in the morning he went to sleep and as I looked at him in his crib my anger turned to tears. I felt so small and hopeless.

I knew that a friend at work went to church so I got up the courage to tell him what happened. We began to meet and he helped me understand that the root of my problem was my brokenness and sin. I could not be the man I was meant to be because I did not have a relationship with God.

