

# LESSON 7: YOUR STORY

God works to mature you as a believer and to bless you as you tell people about Jesus Christ whom you have experienced personally in your life. You will meet with both acceptance and rejection, but you will be blessed as God begins to use you to reveal the reality of Jesus' love to others.

## Review and reflection:

- What are the two commands that Jesus spoke of in response to the question, "Which is the great commandment of the Law?"
- What is the Great Commission?
- Are you willing to be an obedient disciple who helps produce other obedient disciples of Jesus?
- How can a small discipleship group help you remain obedient to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission?
- Do you have any questions about what you have been reading and learning?

## BEING A WITNESS FOR CHRIST

Definition: A witness is a person who gives testimony to what he has personally seen, heard, or experienced.

Read **Acts 1:6–9**

- After His resurrection and just before His ascension to heaven, what did Jesus tell His apostles they were to do?
- What does this mean?
- Where were they to begin? Where were they to be witnesses?
- How do we know that this command was to be obeyed by others beside the apostles?
- Would it extend to Christ's followers today? Why? Where?
- Compare this passage to Matthew 28:19–20. Why are both of these commands still active today?

Read **Acts 22:1–21**: Paul's witness to a hostile audience

Read **Acts 26:1–23**: Paul's witness before rulers and prominent people

Paul tells his story in each of these passages. What principles can we learn from this information about Paul's story?

From the passages in Acts, we see how Paul told his story in two different situations. Although they are slightly different in content, the outline is the same:

- Before: What his life was like before he met Jesus
- How: How he met Jesus and made Him his Savior and Lord.
- After: What his life became after he met Jesus and began walking in obedience to Him.

Why do you think that Jesus wants all of us to become witnesses for Him concerning what He has done in our lives?

Read **Matthew 10:32–33**

Your personal story of how you came to know Jesus is a wonderful way to witness for Him. The four gospels and the book of Acts are filled with stories of how people met Jesus. All of these encounters are unique and are written down for our benefit. Each one of us has a unique story also. He wants us to use our story to tell others about Him.

People who may not be open to talking about Jesus are usually not offended if you tell them your story, because you are simply telling them about your personal life experience. People might disagree with teachings about Jesus, but they cannot argue about what happened in your life. Your story is a powerful way to introduce people to Jesus.

## PREPARING YOUR STORY AS A WITNESS TO OTHERS

Telling your story can be the best means you have to engage an individual or a group to talk about Jesus. In this next activity, you will begin to prepare your personal story so that you will be ready to share it with others.

Write down your thoughts about each of the following three segments of your life: (Note: If you received Christ as a child, you probably want to use the second set of questions about totally committing your life to Christ.)

- Before – What was my life like before I received Christ? *Or* before I totally committed my life to Christ?
- How – How did I come to receive Christ as Lord and Savior? *Or* to give Him complete control of my life?
- After – What changes happened in my life after I received Christ? *Or* after I totally committed my life to Christ?

#### **TIPS: Preparing Your Personal Story**

- Pray as you prepare your story. Pray as you finalize your story. Pray as you share your story.
- Prepare your story so that the listener will understand HOW Jesus has changed your life.
- Avoid too much detail about the bad things in your past that might glamorize sinful activities.
- When telling how you came to trust in Christ, say it in a way that helps others know how they can trust Him too.
- It may be helpful to include a short Bible verse, if it fits naturally and if it will aid understanding.
- Use common, non-church language as you tell your story. Avoid using religious terms like “converted,” “saved,” “born again,” etc., which may have no meaning (or a negative meaning) to people.
- Avoid preaching; you are simply telling your story.
- Avoid speaking negatively about any other religious tradition, especially the one you followed before trusting in Christ. Focus on what Christ has done in your life, not the errors of your former faith.
- End your story naturally. Sometimes it is appropriate to conclude by asking for a person’s response. For example, you could say, “Have you ever experienced something like this in your life?” If yes, ask, “Would you like to? And then ask to explain the gospel.

It will take some time to prepare your story. Write it out and practice telling it aloud. Each of the three segments (Before, How, After) should be only about one minute in length.

## **SHARING YOUR STORY AS A WITNESS TO OTHERS**

**“Prayer, Care, Share” is a means of being able to share the good news of Jesus Christ with people you already know.**

- **Prayer:** Think of someone you would want to have a relationship with Christ. Tell him that you like to pray for people, and wonder how you might pray for him. Let him share with you. If no immediate response, you might suggest: “Perhaps you have issues at work, health concerns, problems in life, or issues with people?” Listen carefully. You do not pray with them at this time, but you later take the request to God regularly. Keep prayer requests confidential, only sharing them with God and not with other people. Return at a convenient time and ask about the things you have been praying about and if there are other things that you could be praying for. Be natural and never push them.
- **Care:** Seek to care for the person in tangible ways. Help him with things around his home or garden or work. Help with children’s needs. Give food as is appropriate to your culture. Do things together. If he is of a different religion, or especially far from God, you might want to start with care before asking for prayer requests.
- **Share:** There will eventually be an invitation or appropriate opportunity to share your story and perhaps Jesus’ story with him. Be prepared, in any conversation with the person, to share your story. A person seldom argues with your story because it is your personal experience. Before or after you share your story, you might ask him to share his story. You might ask, “What has been your own spiritual journey in your life?” Listen carefully and respectfully. Sharing your story usually opens the door to sharing the gospel. We will talk about this in the next lesson.

## **LEARNING AND GROWING IN THE WEEKS AHEAD**

#### **Prepare and practice your story**

- Prepare your story. Use the instructions in this lesson. Write out your story in an interesting way that can be learned and shared in about three minutes, asking one or two friends to help you make it clear and interesting.
- Practice telling your story until you have memorized it and can give it fully without notes.
- Share it with two believing friends and one stranger, telling them that this is an assignment. Perhaps have a partner with you when you share with the stranger.

#### **Prepare in a journal the prayer requests you receive and notes about the person for whom you are praying**

- Make a list of people whom you would desire to have a relationship with Christ.
- Prayerfully pick five people from your list with whom you will begin a Prayer, Care, Share ministry.
- Begin your ministry with the five.
- Ask a partner to hold you accountable in maintaining a Prayer, Care, Share ministry with those you have chosen.