



ELEMENTS

Week 7: Telling Your Story

RECALL

DISCUSS YOUR EXPERIENCE:

Over the past week your assignment was to pray daily through the five components of the Lord's Prayer (Praise, Submission, Provision, Confession, Direction/Protection). Did you form any new prayer habits that will strengthen your relationship with Him? If yes, please share them with the group.

ICEBREAKER:

Have everyone in your group select their favorite movie. Choose three words that describe the movie, but do not include any words from the title or any of the character's names. Take turns sharing your three descriptive words and allowing the rest of the group to try and guess the movie title.

Selecting your words carefully is important to conveying your message. The same can be said about telling your faith story. If told well, your story can be both succinct and powerful.

FOCUS:

This week we will be focusing on our individual faith stories or testimonies. Our stories are powerful tools that should be used for the advancement of God's story. Being able to tell our story, of a life changed by faith in Christ, can reveal to others their need for the same restoration. In essence, we become God's storytellers.

The process of telling our story should not lead to apprehension. You don't need a seminary degree to tell your own story. It does not need to be filled with complex biblical context. Your story should be easy to remember and told in simple, clear terms that anyone can understand. For example, Karl Barth, a well-known 20th century theologian, when asked to summarize the content of his multi volume work entitled, Church Dogmatics, responded, "You can summarize it in this way - 'Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.'"

God wants to use us to reach those far from Him by telling our stories of faith. People remember stories so let's see how we can develop ours to serve the Lord.

REVEAL

PRAY FOR GUIDANCE:

Now take a few moments and ask God to help you understand, grasp and apply the spiritual truths of this week's selected Bible passage.

2 Corinthians 5:17-21 (HCSB)

¹⁷ "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, [he is] a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come.

¹⁸ Everything is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ That is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed the message of reconciliation to us.

²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, certain that God is appealing through us. We plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God." ²¹ He made the One who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."



REFLECT

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT:

As a group, utilize your study bibles or on-line resources to help you answer as many of the following questions about the selected passage as you can. Keep in mind, these questions are intended to be a guide and you may not be able to find all of the answers or have time to address each one in the group.

1. Who? Who wrote the book and/or passage? Who was the intended audience? Who are the main characters in the story?
2. What? What are some of the key words and their meanings in the passage?
3. When? When was the book or passage written? What was historically occurring at the time?
4. Where? In what geographic location did the story take place? What was the setting?
5. Why? Why was this book or passage written? What was the main purpose?

RECOGNIZE

KNOW THE TRUTH(S):

Keeping in mind the context of the selected passage (see **Reflect**), read the Scripture as a group and carefully take note of the truth(s) and/or promises God provides. Look for God's promises, plans, provisions, & purposes. What did it mean? What does it mean? What meaning is unclear?

Were you able to recognize these truths in the 2 Corinthians passage?

1. Verse 17: By being united with Christ through faith we experience a new beginning. This is not a change from the old, but a fresh start, a type of regeneration, or a rebirth. Our views, motives, and attitudes should not be altered, but rather recreated. How should this restoration process be manifested in our lives? Give some examples of how your faith in Christ created a new heart in you.
2. Verses 18-19, 21: For those who remain trapped by their own sins and are far from God, He offers reconciliation or forgiveness through belief in Jesus Christ. God treats the sins of believers as if they do not belong to them, but rather to Christ himself. Christ bore our sins and took God's punishment for all. God subsequently treats believers as forgiven. Even though you have been forgiven, in what areas of your life are you still trapped by sin?
3. Verse 20: While God has given believers the gift of reconciliation; He has also given believers the responsibility of spreading His message to others. Believers are God's chosen representatives for conveying the specific terms by which He provides forgiveness. If you are a believer, are you being a representative for God? If not, what changes do you need to make in your life to assume this responsibility?

RESPOND

TAKE ACTION:

You've now prayed asking God to **R**eveal Himself and help you understand the selected passage; you've **R**elected on the context in which the passage was written; you've **R**ecognized God's timeless truths; and now you must **R**espond. To help determine your response, as a group, discuss the following questions:

1. God's salvation story can be summarized in many ways. One popular version is the Roman Road. This is a compilation of verses from the book of Romans. Look up these four verses and discuss the story of salvation that they create (Romans 3:23, Romans 5:8, Romans 6:23, Romans 10:9). How could you use this simple set of verses to be more of an ambassador for Christ?



2. Bill Hybels is the author of the book, *Just Walk Across The Room*. In this book he makes two key points about telling our faith story. First, our story should be succinct and easy to remember. Second, our story is of no value if we do not tell it to others. Where have you used your story to communicate to others about God's grace in your life? If you have never told your story, what aspects of your life do you think might relate and minister to others?

3. Jesus was a master storyteller. He used stories or parables to relate God's truth to others. In this way, people were able to both understand the message, as well as, remember the lesson in the future. Take a moment to read the Parable of the Samaritan Woman in John 4: 1-26. Pay special attention to Jesus' boldness in verses 7-10. What lesson can we learn from Jesus' actions? Name a relationship in your life where you have stopped short of sharing your story and God's story due to trepidation? In addition, note Jesus' succinct messages in verses 13-14 and 21-24. Can you summarize God's work in your life in thirty seconds or less? Give it a try.

THIS WEEK:

Your assignment this week is to write out your faith story. Summarize your message into three key buckets. What was your life like before you knew Christ? How did you come to know Christ? How has your life changed since you came to know Christ? If you do not yet know Christ, simply stop the story where you are today. Try to tell your story in 100 words or less. Send your completed testimonies to your LifeGroup leader by e-mail and, if you feel comfortable, ask your leader to share them with the group during the week. Next week we will begin by discussing the impact these stories had on the readers.

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