

So you want to be a Christian? Telling your Story

Jim Elliot, before his dramatic death on a beach in Ecuador at the hands of the very people he was attempting to share the story of Christ, wrote these words:

“Lord, make me a crisis man. Let me not be a mile-post on a single road, but make me a fork that men must turn one way or another in facing Christ in me.”

Storytelling is one of the most powerful forms of communications on the planet. If you want to connect with the human heart or draw close to people tell a story. Nothing raises passion as much as a good story. This explains why movies and television have such enormous influence over those who submit to these mediums – they are in the storytelling business.

God would have to be considered the greatest Storyteller. From cover to cover the Bible is a compilation of stories. It included the accounts of the successes and failures of people and their encounters with God. Jesus three years on earth can be divided into two categories: miracles and stories.

As a Christian charged by Jesus Himself to share your faith and to make disciples, your greatest asset is your own story. Your story as a Christian should be made up of the places and times you met God and where God met you, where heaven and earth have intersected within your life.

The greatest challenge and opportunity of our lives is to invite others into God’s story.

The fact is that every Christian has a story to tell. We all will tell our stories differently according to our circumstances, personalities and opportunities.

Jesus was a storyteller and one who lived out His story. His communication style was to continually use stories and word pictures to communicate eternal truths to His followers. He was always conscious of the Father’s story of redemption and His role in it. He met thousands of people but no matter who or where He met them He always found a way to invite them into God’s story. Sharing His faith was not a pre-programmed one size fits all kind of thing. He knew who He was talking to and He always found a way to invite and connect them to the Kingdom of God.

Here are four examples of Jesus sharing His faith and telling His story. These four elements will also be a part of our testimony. You may not use these four words but they are reflective of what happens when we accept the salvation Christ offers.

1. A story of rebirth: Nicodemus

John 3

He was a Pharisee named Nicodemus and he came secretly to see Jesus at night. Jesus challenged him at his very core and his need for humility instead of religious arrogance and then He invited him into God's story of rebirth.

Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, unless you are born again, you cannot see the Kingdom of God."⁴ "What do you mean?" exclaimed Nicodemus. "How can an old man go back into his mother's womb and be born again?"

⁵ *Jesus replied, "I assure you, no one can enter the Kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit. ⁶ Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. John 3:3-6 NLT*

¹⁶ *"For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 NLT*

If you are a Christian you have been born again. This rebirth is reflected in the fact that you heard the message and story of Jesus Christ and you accepted Him into your life. You ask forgiveness for your sins in genuine sorrow and repentance and you know by faith that your sins were forgiven. It is a rebirth of major proportions. It's not just a little gum chewing trip down to the altar. There is genuine conviction for sin and sorrow for disobedience to God followed by the joy of salvation and knowing that you have been adopted into the family.

A part of your story must be how you were reborn into Christ's family. What is your story?

2. A story of restoration: A paralyzed man Mark 2

When this man's friends desperately started tearing into a roof to get their friend to Christ He acknowledged their initiative and then he offered this man restoration.

When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the news spread quickly that he was back home. ² Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door. While he was preaching God's word to them, ³ four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. ⁴ They couldn't bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, so they dug a hole through the roof above his head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus. ⁵ Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "My child, your sins are forgiven."

⁶ *But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves, ⁷ "What is he saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!"*

⁸ *Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so he asked them, "Why do you question this in your hearts? ⁹ Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk'? ¹⁰ So I will prove to you that the*

Son of Man^[a] has the authority on earth to forgive sins.” Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said,¹¹ “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!”

¹² And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, “We’ve never seen anything like this before!” Mark 2:1-12 NLT

When you become a Christian there will be some level restoration. Because we are all born as sinners by nature we generally have time to make some destructive messes with our lives. It is into our personal worlds that Jesus comes to bring restoration and hope.

Have you messed up? Do you feel like your life is broken? When Jesus comes into our lives he makes us over. There is another “r” word that we should be familiar with and that is the word regeneration. When we are saved by Jesus Christ, He does not leave us broken. That theory is as bad as saying He only had the power to heal people partially. He restores us and regenerates us into new creatures.

One sat alone beside the highway begging
His eyes were blind the light he could not see.
He clutched his rags, and shivered in the shadows.
Then Jesus came and bade His darkness flee.

When Jesus comes the tempters power is broken.
When Jesus comes the tears are washed away.
He takes the gloom and fills the life with glory
For all is changed when Jesus comes to stay.

A major part of your story will be the story of you restoration. When Jesus comes our lives are restored to live in His will. What is your story?

3. A story of redemption: A broken woman John 4

She was a broken woman at a well to draw some water and Jesus offered living water and a chance for redemption from five failed marriages and a dysfunctional relationship she was currently in. She listened and responded and she became an overnight part of God’s story by bringing nearly all the town out to see a Man that told her everything she had ever done.

Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Please give me a drink.”⁸ He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.⁹ The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans.^[b] She said to Jesus, “You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?”

¹⁰ Jesus replied, “If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water.”

¹¹ “But sir, you don’t have a rope or a bucket,” she said, “and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? ¹² And besides, do you think you’re greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?”

¹³ Jesus replied, “Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. ¹⁴ But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.”

¹⁵ “Please, sir,” the woman said, “give me this water! Then I’ll never be thirsty again, and I won’t have to come here to get water.” John 4:7-15 NLT

This woman was living in sin. She was broken and an outcast in many peoples eyes. But Jesus came to her and offered salvation and a new life. He redeemed her brokenness and gave her the opportunity to make something out of her life.

Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, “He told me everything I ever did!” ⁴⁰ When they came out to see him, they begged him to stay in their village. So he stayed for two days, ⁴¹ long enough for many more to hear his message and believe. ⁴² Then they said to the woman, “Now we believe, not just because of what you told us, but because we have heard him ourselves. Now we know that he is indeed the Savior of the world.” John 4:39-42 NLT

Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it!
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;
Redeemed through His infinite mercy,
His child and forever I am

Redeemed, redeemed,
Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb;
Redeemed, redeemed,
His child and forever I am.

Redeemed, and so happy in Jesus,
No language my rapture can tell;
I know that the light of His presence
With me doth continually dwell.

I think of my blessed Redeemer,
I think of Him all the day long;
I sing, for I cannot be silent;
His love is the theme of my song.

When you tell your story you will want to tell how you were redeemed by God’s love.
What is your story?

4. A story of removal: A possessed man Mark 5

Jesus set this man free by removing the evil spirits that tormented him daily. He restored his mind and redeemed his life from the devastation of wasted years. The man was overcome with thankfulness and wanted to follow Jesus but he was sent home to tell his story to his own community.

When Jesus climbed out of the boat, a man possessed by an evil spirit came out from a cemetery to meet him. ³ This man lived among the burial caves and could no longer be restrained, even with a chain. ⁴ Whenever he was put into chains and shackles—as he often was—he snapped the chains from his wrists and smashed the shackles. No one was strong enough to subdue him. ⁵ Day and night he wandered among the burial caves and in the hills, howling and cutting himself with sharp stones.

⁶ When Jesus was still some distance away, the man saw him, ran to meet him, and bowed low before him. ⁷ With a shriek, he screamed, “Why are you interfering with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In the name of God, I beg you, don’t torture me!” ⁸ For Jesus had already said to the spirit, “Come out of the man, you evil spirit.”

⁹ Then Jesus demanded, “What is your name?” And he replied, “My name is Legion, because there are many of us inside this man.” Mark 5:2-9 NLT

A crowd soon gathered around Jesus, and they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons. He was sitting there fully clothed and perfectly sane, and they were all afraid.

¹⁸ As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon possessed begged to go with him. ¹⁹ But Jesus said, “No, go home to your family, and tell them everything the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been.” ²⁰ So the man started off to visit the Ten Towns of that region and began to proclaim the great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed at what he told them. Mark 5:15,18-20 NLT

What Jesus removes from us is the ugliness of sin. He gives us a new heart, new desires, new values, new hopes and new goals.

Rebirth, restoration, redemption and removal: all of these should be part of the story of every Christian. Jesus appealed to men and women at the point of access: the mind of Nicodemus, the body of the paralytic, the heart of the Samaritan and the spirit of the demoniac. Their stories were broken and yet Jesus breathed new life into them and gave them hope for good endings.

I love to tell the story of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love.
I love to tell the story, because I know 'tis true;
It satisfies my longings as nothing else can do.

I love to tell the story, 'twill be my theme in glory,
To tell the old, old story of Jesus and His love.

I love to tell the story; more wonderful it seems
Than all the golden fancies of all our golden dreams.
I love to tell the story, it did so much for me;
And that is just the reason I tell it now to thee.

I love to tell the story; 'tis pleasant to repeat
What seems, each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet.
I love to tell the story, for some have never heard
The message of salvation from God's own holy Word.

I love to tell the story, for those who know it best
Seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest.
And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song,
'Twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long.

*And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone.
Mark 16:15 NLT*

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8 NLT

*But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.
Acts 20:24 NLT*

*We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life.
1 John 1:1 NLT*

Prior to his conversion in an inner city mission Joe was known as hopeless and dirty wino. It seemed as though his existence in the ghetto would fade away one night in a drunken stupor. But God had a different plan for Joe. He made a life-changing commitment to Christ and was supernaturally transformed. He became a compassionate and caring person who spent his days helping in the mission.

No task was too lowly for Joe. He cleaned up the vomit of alcoholics, scrubbed down the restrooms of careless drunks, assisted men into bed when they were too drunk to find their bunks, and always maintained a smile that communicated his gratitude for being able to help.

One night when the mission director was giving an evangelistic appeal, a repentant drunk came to the altar and began to pray. He prayed, "Oh God, make me like Joe. Please make me like Joe. He shouted his prayer over and over. Finally the director stepped down and said, "I think it would be better if you prayed, 'Make me like Jesus!'" The man looked up and asked, "Is He like Joe?" IF a person didn't know about Jesus would he or she want to be like us.

There are about 600 inmates who await execution in the state of California. A dozen of these are women. All of them have committed heinous crimes. But that doesn't stop Ann Baker, a grandmother from San Diego, from treating the inmates like she believes Jesus would treat them.

Baker heads a letter writing campaign designed to love the men and women on Death Row. The people who write do not write to condemn or condone. They write out of conviction and compassion. They write because they believe even the worst criminal is a child of God.

The letters are sometimes mundane. Baker writes to her prison pen pal about the dog, going to church and seeing the hot-air balloon festival in Albuquerque. Her male pen pal tells Baker about exercising in the prison yard and of the screaming and cursing that goes on around him at night. "On a bad night, it's hard to hold onto his sanity," she says.

They trade trivia questions. "We're constantly trying to stump each other," says Baker. One LA County attorney who prosecuted a woman convicted of killing her five children is not a fan of the outreach program. She says "as a society we've decided these people are beyond redemption." Beyond Redemption? This group believes otherwise.