
SIMPLE STEPS TO SHARING YOUR PERSONAL SPIRITUAL STORY

Many of us want to invite people to Church and even lead them to Jesus ourselves but all of that starts with having a spiritual conversation. How do you start that conversation? Do you pull out 15 Bible verses that you've memorized? Do you hand them a tract? Do you ask, "If you died tonight would you go to heaven or hell?"

Nope. Those are not the best way to start. Most of these are more likely to start a debate than to start a truly spiritual conversation and make this relationship redemptive. The best way to start a spiritual conversation is to share your story.

Here are four simple steps toward sharing your personal spiritual story:

First, notice GOD-APPOINTMENTS

The first thing that helps is to notice the appointments God is putting on your calendar.

You have your calendar. Your to-do list. Your punch-card. But God has his calendar for you that you won't show up for unless you look for these opportunities. All around you people are experiencing heart-ache, family crisis, and depression; they are looking for hope and a future. When people open up with you about this stuff, even just a little, it's a God-appointed time to open up to them in turn. Share with them what has made a difference in your life. Take the time to pause and consider what God-appointments are opening up for you from now on.



Two examples:

a) You show up 20 minutes early for work. The guy in the cubicle next to yours is already there--which is odd. He never comes to work early. He is disheveled and red-eyed. You ask, "You doing ok bro?" He tells you his wife kicked him out last night and he slept on a friend's couch. He stares at the wall blankly and says, "I know I'm not a great husband--I have my faults. I just don't know what to do about it."

b) A lady who you've befriended at the gym notices a t-shirt you have on and finds out you go to Church. She says, "Oh my... you just need to know that I could NEVER darken the door of a Church. I'm pretty sure the place would fall down on top of me because of all I've done." She laughs hard and starts to refill her water-bottle while you wait to do the same at the drinking fountain.

What are your God-appointments to notice first?

Next, tell YOUR STORY

The next thing to do is to make the most of this appointment by telling your super-short story of what you were like or *would be like* without God.

All you have to do to start this next part is ask, "Can I tell you a short story about me?" Most people wouldn't mind hearing a short story, so they are probably going to say yes, or, at minimum, say, "Can you tell me tomorrow? I have to run."

Ben Okri, Nigerian poet and novelist, said "Stories can conquer fear, you know. They can make the heart bigger." You have fear about sharing your story, and they have fear that you've started to talk about spiritual things. Your story closes the gap between these two fears.

Two examples:

a) "Well, my story is a pretty ugly one. I was an alcoholic and wouldn't admit it. But I had pretty much ruined every relationship in my life. My parents. My sisters. My co-workers. My friends. Even my kids. Definitely my wife. I suppose I didn't even realize how bad it was till one Thanksgiving I got drunk and passed out before we even got the Turkey out of the oven. My entire extended family tried to wake me up and there was a bunch of screaming and fighting and I ended up falling in the pool. It was just insane."

b) "Well, unlike you, I don't think the church would fall on my head. For two reasons: first, I grew up in the church, and more importantly, I figured out that none of us is good enough in the first place. Even though I was a church kid I found out in the 5th grade that I was pretty rotten to my core. I discovered that I really hated people. I wanted to hurt them. I would cut down other kids and lie about them just to make them look horrible, and myself better. I think if something hadn't happened I wouldn't be the kind of person you would want to know."

What is your story to tell next?

Now, share your GOD-MOMENT

Now, explain how God showed up in a moment in your life and it changed the direction of things for you spiritually.

This is the middle of your story. It might have been a Taxi-driver telling you a Bible verse, a pastor stopping by your home, a parent praying with you after you ran away from home, a youth-worker who shared salvation with you, someone that had mercy on you when you were down and out, etc. What was a key moment that you think God showed up in your life? It doesn't need to be an entirely ground-shattering moment--it just needs to be symbolic of a hundred other times in your life when God has shown up.

Two examples:

a) "The next morning, the day after Thanksgiving where I missed the Turkey, I had the day to myself as my wife was working and my kids went to see their grandparents. I had been invited to those AA meetings a million times. But one of the invite cards was in my drawer. I saw they met at a church down the street every day at 5:30 p.m. I went that day, and met a guy named Rick that took me under his wing. Rick wasn't just in recovery, he had something about him that made me want to be like him. I later found out that Rick was a Christian, and he showed me the ropes of recovery at the same time as showing me the ropes as a new believer.

b) "My teacher in school that year was a younger woman who graduated from the nearby Christian college. She was taking a walk on a Saturday by my house and stopped when she saw me outside playing. We sat down in the grass and she confronted me about my attitude. She said that she noticed how I would cut down the other girls in the class, in particular, and she asked why I would do that. She told me how she had a hard urban upbringing raised by a single-mom on welfare. God had changed her heart in how she saw other people through her mom's servant example. That conversation with that teacher changed the direction of my life, and I prayed with her at the end of it right there on my front lawn."

What is your God-moment to share now?

Then, testify to YOUR CHANGE

Then, testify to the change in your life since this God-moment in your story. You may have thought that you would not be good at helping your friends and co-workers find Jesus, because you don't know the Bible well enough, or you don't have good answers to the hard theological questions people might have. But the reality is you know the most important thing to sharing our faith: *you know the difference it has made in your life.*

The person you are talking to needs to know how God has made a difference in your life. It won't matter if you have a bunch of Bible verses to quote or apologetics outlines to spout--they want to know the difference it has made for you. So just tell them how things are different now than they were for you, or would have been, without God.

Two examples:

a) "Since Rick showed me the ropes of the Christian life I've seen so much turn around in my life. My marriage was saved, my kids started to respect me, and things started to even come together for me at work. There have been some bumps in the road, for sure, but I feel like a completely different person now since then."

b) "That teacher helped me see the world differently, and even though I was young and I grew up in the church, I really do believe that I am a changed person to this day because of it. I am so thankful for the way my relationship with God has changed me and made my life new since then. I really do think I'd be lost without God in my life."

What is your change to testify then?—DD

Reflect or Discuss:

- A. What kind of God-appointed opportunities can you look back and see you did not take advantage of? How might you do so differently next time?
- B. What part of your story might be relatable to other people when you share it? Does that thought help you overcome fear about sharing?
- C. What God-moments are most important in your spiritual journey? How might you choose what to share with others who are ready?
- D. Are you truly different than you were, or would have been, without God in your life? If you have trouble articulating this, ask someone else to give some of this testimony to you and write it down.