

# Sharing Your Story in a Broken World



You are trying to think through how to share the story of how God has and is changing your life. Maybe you have been asked to share it up front to an audience. Perhaps more simply, you want to become better at sharing with your friends. The following is an exercise to help aid the formation of what and how you communicate.

Your story is one of the most important things about you. Your life experiences are what have shaped who you are, how you perceive life, how you view yourself, God and others around you. God has both allowed and even caused your experiences to be integrated into your very core. In this regard, He has shaped you uniquely to have an impact in this world for His glory through the *good* things that have been a part of your life... but also the *hard* things.

Our world is broken. People are broken. Non-Christians are broken. Christians are still broken in the process of being made more whole. We all carry deep baggage and that is the reality of a world gone awry. The non-Christian world is tired of hearing a sugarcoated view of the Christian life. They are tired of hearing about the Christian religion but not seeing any real life change in those that profess Christianity. They are tired of hypocrisy. They are tired of Christians with whom they cannot relate to—people who pretend to have it all together but are obviously in denial or out touch with the realities of real life. Often this is because Christians have been afraid to be honest with others as we communicate what Christ has, or hasn't done in our lives....perhaps we are actually afraid to be honest with ourselves.

I have intentionally NOT called this exercise "Sharing your Testimony". That phrase conjures up images of someone standing up starting with a story that begins at age 5 when they invited Jesus into their hearts and how life has been so much different and perfectly satisfying ever since. That is not real life and probably not even Biblical! Christians are most certainly "new" in Christ but this newness is "positionally" complete but "experientially" developing day by day and will not be complete in that sense until heaven. We are still broken, but being healed. Without Christ, people whether they know it or not are broken. We are broken people going to broken people with a message of healing.

With the above in mind, I would like to have you do a bit of introspection as you form what you might communicate about your story to a broken world. Before you share your story to someone else, you first need to examine your own story. We each need to examine your own brokenness before you approach other broken people who do not know Christ. What are your longings deep down? Where have you tried to meet them? What are the significant hurts and pains in life that have shaped you? What are your hopes, dreams, unmet expectations?

Non-Believers have the same stories as you, the same hopes and dreams, the same pains. Jesus is now transforming your life but once again, you are not yet complete, there are still broken things, perhaps many. You are still not what you want to be or what you will be some day. You can admit that! I believe this is the intersection point with the "not yet Christians" of a broken world. The fallen world that you experience is met with a different perspective than theirs. It is a perspective of hope and redemption, not of despair and suppression. You have what they need! Your stories can shape how they view what Christ has done for them and how they should come under his design for life.

But let's get practical. What does this all mean as you have opportunities to actually communicate with friends that are a part of this broken world? Below are some questions with which to begin. They attempt to help you explore your own background. They are directed at helping you dig up the emotions that expose the reality of who you are, who you want to be and what God is doing and has done in your life. Perhaps you already know them. Perhaps they have yet to surface in your life and walk with God?

The questions will then move you to focus in on a broken area of your life in which God has indeed moved and begun to heal. But in light of what I said above, I want you to focus on an area in which the healing is not yet complete- of course that could literally be any area since nothing is experientially complete. Focus on an area in which you have seen changes that are beyond just trying harder and stuffing your emotions and where true heart change has begun to taken place. Think of an area that has forced you to realize your brokenness in front of a holy God. Yet, at the same time, you have come to grow in your understanding that He still loves you despite what you have done or who you are. Can you point others towards the reality that this unconditional acceptance is what is currently compelling you towards real change at a core level?

Then form a brief explanation of your process in beginning a relationship with God. Use the broken area as a focal point and show how this area has exposed your need for God. Explain how placing your faith in Christ instead of yourself has lead to a process of bringing life to this area and how your perspective on God, yourself and others has changed.

In communicating to a broken world, I think it is very important to communicate how you began a personal relationship with Jesus, the steps of actually trusting Christ. But this may not be the focal point of your story...It does not need to start there especially for those of you that came to faith at an early age. That is the struggle many people have. You may not have a radical "conversion" story and so your story doesn't seem to be very engaging. But your life is engaging! How God has moved is incredible! You can focus on the process of transformation rather than a moment or event in which you prayed a prayer. Don't get me wrong, Yes, receiving Christ is the greatest day of life on this earth for a Christian, but that is not necessarily the point non-believers are waiting to hear....that is until they understand that you understand real life....then they may want "real" life as well.

Here is the real work of this process:

**Life History Questions:**

1. What is an overarching broken area in your life? It may be helpful to think of: The first time you realized that life was not all that you hoped it would be? The first time you got in a fight? The first time your dad hurt your feelings? An area of life that keeps you awake at night. (ie. Insecurity, performance, people pleasing, comparison etc.)

2. What are some specific emotions connected to that area?

*Don't just focus on the experiences of your story themselves, but the emotions behind them. I personally have a large hurt in my life from a break-up in college. However others may not have that same type of hurt. Where then am I to intersect their stories? It is the emotions of life that we will build bridges. We may not have the same exact experiences, but we all feel the pain of rejection, of loneliness, of hopelessness, of despair. What are the consistent emotions that have crept up in your darker moments, in times when life was not as life should be? This will be harder for some of you "non-emotives" like me... "Emotions? What are those?" But this is really key in sharing your story.*

*(ex. for me, not meeting my dad's expectations consistently built in me a longing for more security. It made me feel lonely and caused a longing for approval from someone, anyone. Loneliness, longing for more, resentment and fear are all emotions I feel when I think of insecurity in my life.)*

3. Now, let's get really specific- Bring to mind one particular situation that captures the theme of brokenness in your life. Is there a specific event or period that brings your issues in life to a focal point? Again, try and be specific. A particular day or moment in high school where you broke down. A certain thing someone said that made you feel inadequate. A constant idol to which you seem to return.

*(ex. for me, it was a story of a break-up my Freshman year in college. That period reveals a lot of what was going on in my life, heart and my emotions at the time and on a wider scale shows some recurring issues of insecurity in my life. It is also a story that connects easily with a lot of people who have experienced a similar break-up. But it can also connect with most everyone as I explain the emotions of loneliness, despair and insecurity that I experienced.)*

**Brainstorm:**

## Your Story Outline- (presentation type audience)

1. Begin right away with the story or situation above capturing attention and letting people into your heart and emotions. Again, focus not just on the events, but what you were feeling at the time as I have said over and over. Try and let others in. Force yourself to be vulnerable in what you share. Be funny, be creative, be specific and grab people's attention. Don't start with, "I grew up in a Christian home"! Don't start with "They asked me to share my testimony"! Those kill people's attention.

*(ex. "You may not know it, but I am terribly insecure...here is why...". "I have always thought of myself as a strong person, until my parents split up...let me tell you about it". "I can't remember a day when my parents didn't fight...". "I can remember growing up confused about what true love really was". "When I was 12 I came home and my dad's car was gone...". (You grabbed my attention with any of those! I want to hear about what has shaped your life and how God is changing you!))*

2. Then describe when you received Christ (probably going back in time for a lot of you) and what led to that moment, what you understood and what you did. (The process of trusting Christ and becoming a Christian. Let me know how I can also become a Christian.)

3. Now return to the emotions that have continued to be a part of your life, even after you trusted Christ. But now explain how God has slowly changed your heart and responses to similar situations.

*(ex. For me, two years after the break-up, I was cut from my college soccer team. Again, this was devastating to my security. But I had a new outlook since God had drawn me nearer to Him and I was beginning to understand his love, care for me and his unconditional hand on my life.)*

4. Close by returning to the initial story and explain a different response to that event now in light of processing it with Christ as Lord of your life. Again, what I want you to focus on, are the longings of your hearts and the emotional attachments to them. As you explain those longings, talk about how Christ has come in to begin to heal them and redeem your life...though not yet complete and remember you don't need to communicate completeness because it is not yet there!

*(ex. Though the divorce is still hard, the anger and confusion about love has been replaced with the model of perfect love. For me- the break-up in college was hard, but God has replaced some of my insecurities and loneliness with His security and belonging. )*

### First pass Outline: