

Bearing Faithful Witness - Resources

Exploring what it means to become a community that responds to "our people" by living and communicating a good news story.

RESOURCE #7

Reasons Why We Don't Tell our Stories and Reasons Why We Should Tell our Stories

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A few years ago I was chatting with my friend about the idea that every believer has a story to tell. We all have a "before," our life without Jesus; a "middle," or crossroads, where we receive him; and an "after," our life with Jesus. Even if our "after" isn't yet "complete," we can still attest to the power of Jesus in our lives.

My friend nodded emphatically, "Yes, everyone has a story!" "So what's yours?" I asked her. "Oh, I don't have one!" she answered.

I laughed at the time, but in my experience of trying to help people tell their stories, I realize that many believers have the same response. When asked to tell their story of Jesus working in their lives, they are reluctant. Few people tell their story easily, many people don't tell it at all.

There are different reasons for this. Here are some:

- **We do not want to put ourselves on a pedestal.** That seems valid - a good Christian would not want to steal the glory from God. Far be it from us to flaunt the good things we have done, especially if Jesus is the one doing the work in us. At the least, it could be seen as bragging and that's just bad manners.
- **We want to keep our stories private.** Granted, some stories have sensitive information that should be revealed in an appropriate setting. But oftentimes we over-protect our stories. We tend to hold on tightly to the changes God has made in our lives. We may not want to be judged by our past or be accountable for our future. Letting others know lets them in.
- **We don't have all the answers.** Telling our stories invites questions from others. If we have had an encounter with God, then people will want to know more about it. Perhaps we don't feel confident in our Biblical knowledge or are afraid there will be questions we just can't answer, so we don't open ourselves up to embarrassment.
- **We don't think our stories are interesting enough.** Like my friend above, some of us may feel that because we weren't rescued from a down-and-out lifestyle or there wasn't a major visible transformation, then we have nothing to say. This is often true of people raised in Christian homes, who accepted Jesus at a young age, and have lived a fairly wholesome life, as compared to someone who was saved off the streets or has "juicy details." The latter attracts an attentive audience.

But most Christians would agree that if God is doing a redeeming, transformative work in our lives, this is something wonderful, which ought to be shared.

One of my favourite verses is Philemon 1:6: I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. (NIV)

When we "share our faith" with each other, we become partners in the gospel. It increases our awareness of the good things we have in Christ. If this is so, to keep our stories to ourselves would be a disservice to the Christian community.

What actually happens when we tell our stories?

- **We give God the glory.** When we recount the wonderful ways God has worked in our lives, the changes he's made in us, the ways we want to serve him, and the fruit we see because of it, it gives opportunity for others to praise Him.
- **It encourages and inspires others to action.** Paul commends Philemon for "refreshing the saints." I think of the stories I've been privileged to share on my blog - each interview I've carried out and each story I've written had the surprising effect of giving me joy in my own ministry. To know that there are

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others out there, in the trenches, using their gifts, working for the kingdom, is rejuvenating. We're in this together.

- **It broadens our perspective and knowledge of God.** God did not intend for one of us to have all the answers, he intended that we glean the answers and understanding from each other, as a body, united in Christ. When we hear how God responds uniquely to each person, we receive an education about the one who made us. The specifics of those stories reveal the depths of his love.
- **In a world full of bad news, it brings redemption to the forefront.** We have access to the news 24/7. Most of it is bad news, and often skewed to push a worldview that doesn't align with the believer's. But there are redemptive stories happening all around us that, if told, could put these sensationalistic pieces into perspective. The world pushes fear, but God presents love.

Recently I tuned in to [Focus on the Family](#), where the host, Jim Daly, told the listening audience that day, after a particularly moving interview, "We don't own our testimonies; they are bought at a price, the blood of Jesus Christ."

Perhaps if we believed that our stories, along with our lives, belong to Christ, we would be open to sharing them freely.