**How to Tell a Story**

In an age of heated politics, fake news, and arguments, stories hold a sacred place in sharing the Gospel. When Christians share a story with others, it disarms those who have resistance to faith, and allows the listener to encounter God not as a theory (or argument), but as a person working in someone’s life. And why are stories so powerful? Perhaps storytelling is in our DNA, given to us by our Creator. After all, salvation history is the great story of how God saved humanity. Jesus, Himself, was a great storyteller, frequently teaching through parables. And today, we find inspiration in the lives of the saints and in the great things God does in one another. Here’s a few steps to crafting your story:

**Start with a message.** Every storytelling exercise should begin by asking: Who is my audience and what is the message I want to share with them? What is the experience you want to share and why - what is the core “takeaway” you want to leave people with? Boil that idea down to a compelling single statement.

**Let God be the hero.** When you’re sharing a story from your own life, you will be the central figure. However, the ultimate focus should be on people you encountered, lessons you’ve learned, or events you’ve witnessed. The more you celebrate yourself, the less likely your audience will connect with you and your message. Moreover, these stories should all bring glory to God, who orchestrates our lives and situations to bring us closer to Himself.

**Have a clear structure.** There are many different ways to structure a story, but the three ingredients a story must have are a beginning, middle, and end. On a more granular level, a successful story will start with an inciting incident, lead into rising action, build to a climax and ultimately settle into a satisfying resolution.

**Inject emotion and detail but keep it simple**. We’re not looking for a surprising, edge-of-your-seat epic. But a great story needs a little emotion, or drama. Every story has an emotional core, and that emotional core is how the storyteller feels about the events they’re describing. So think about how you felt when your story actually happened. What was motivating you? What troubled you? How did you feel about your surroundings? How do you feel now about what happened then? If you can express that, you can create connections with your listeners, and trust that they’ll be hanging on every word. Structurally, you want to find opportunities in your story to weave your feelings and motivations into its events. Consistently return to your experience of what is happening in the narrative. In fact, taking a second to say something as simple as “I couldn’t believe it!” or “At this point, I was terrified” gives your story the emotional charge it needs to connect.

Some of the most successful and memorable stories are relatively simple and straightforward. Don’t let needless details to detract from your core message. Don’t tell your audience what day of the week it was, for instance, or what shoes you were wearing if it doesn’t advance the story in an artful way. But transporting your audience with a few interesting, well-placed details — how you felt, the expression on a face — can help immerse your listeners and drive home your message.

**Practice makes perfect**  
Storytelling is a “real art form” that requires repeated effort to get right. Practice with a mirror, recording yourself, or testing a story out on family and friends. You can also watch examples of great stories [here](https://www.youtube.com/user/OneBillionStoriescom).

**FILMING LOGISTICS**

* 5-6 minute goal
* Ideally, we’ll start the video by asking you to “Tell us a story about (your chosen topic)…” and then let you share your story. However, if you prefer, we can ask other leading questions along the way!

Sources: <https://hbr.org/2014/07/how-to-tell-a-great-story>;   
<https://theartofcharm.com/art-of-personal-development/how-to-tell-a-great-story/>

**Tell Us A Story Worksheet**

**Start with prayer and your message.**

*Ex. If I’m sharing a story about a pilgrimage to Israel, I can’t recap the entire trip so I need to narrow in on one site, profound experience, or struggle. I also need to figure out what the main message is – not just my experience but what do I want the audience to know about God or what He’s done for me?)*

* Begin with prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to be with you, to show you what He wants you to share, and guide you in your discernment and preparation.
* What is the big-picture topic/experience you want to share?
* Narrow it down: what specific experience or interaction do you want to share?
* What is the core “takeaway” you want people to leave with (what did you learn, what do you want them to know about God or what He’s done for you)?

**Let God be the hero.**

* Other than you, who else is a part of your story? What did they teach you, or what role did they play?
* Describe each of these people in three words.
* What did God do? What did you learn or How did this bring you closer to Him?

**Have a clear structure.**

* Beginning (1/4 of story): what led up to the event?
  + Set the scene - where/when/who?
* Middle (1/2 of story): describe what happened.
  + Paint a picture of the scene – here, you want to be detailed so that the audience feels like they were there with you.
  + What were the circumstances? What happened? How did you feel?
* End (1/4 of story): how did this event impact you?
  + For example, what difference has it made in your life, did you make resolutions to act/think differently.
  + Consider ending with an invitation, a challenge, or a question for the audience to ponder: this may seem a bit uncomfortable, but based on your witness, what can you invite the audience to do? (look for \_\_\_\_ in your own life, where do you see \_\_\_\_ in your life?) Or, consider ending by praying with them.

**Inject emotion and detail but keep it simple**. Go back through the outline you wrote above. How did you feel during each phase of the story? What was motivating you? What troubled you? How did you feel about your surroundings? How do you feel now about what happened then?