



LEADING EVANGELISM

LEARNING HUB

E-Module • How to Tell Your Story





INTRODUCTION

WHY THIS MODULE

Stories are powerful. Stories are engaging. Stories are transformational. Not convinced? Then take a look at [part 1](#) of this module on why stories matter.

Our own story of how we came to faith is a great way to share faith. [Part 2](#) explores how to introduce your story in three different ways.

[Part 3](#) explores how to tell your story well with guidance on things to avoid and how to introduce it.

If you are interested in further resources to help you tell your story well, take a look at [part 4](#).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

As a result of this module you will be:

1. Convinced of the importance of sharing *your* faith story.
2. Able to tell your story in a clear and succinct way.
3. Able to introduce your story into a conversation without forcing it.
4. Aware of additional materials to help you refine your story further.

The module takes 45-60minutes to complete, although if you use the additional materials it will take longer.

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INSTRUCTIONS

You will need to be connected to the internet for the video and web links.

Choose a way or recording your learning that works for you: print off the relevant pages, use the online forms, or go old school and use paper and pen.

01 WHY STORIES MATTER



WE LOVE STORIES

Human beings are ‘storied’ people. We make sense of our world, our lives through story. We find our sense of belonging in story. We learn through story. We describe our experience of living on planet earth as ‘history’.

This is why we love reading books, watching box sets. They tell a story, and we long to know the outcome. It is also why many news articles and insights from scientific research projects are told through a story.

Want to know more?

Watch a psychologist explaining the [neuro science](#) of what happens when we engage with stories, read why [stories](#) are a great way to share faith, or listen to [Tom Wright](#) explain how to tell the forgotten Jesus story.

“

The gospel of Jesus Christ is a story, but it’s quite unlike any other story we will ever encounter. In fact it is not something that we simply hear and understand but a reality in which we live and find our sense of belonging.

Hannah Steele

”

THE BIG STORY

In recent years theologians have reminded us of the importance of story in the Christian faith: His-story as some of them like to describe it.

The big story is one of God’s unfolding purpose for the world, and in it we can find our place, our part. It has a beginning (creation), a middle (Jesus crucified and risen) and an end (consummation when Christ returns).

Therefore it should be no surprise to us that stories are powerful, persuasive and poignant. We are a storied people.

Yet there has also been a growing suspicion of ‘big stories’ (metanarratives) that claim they can make sense of the world.

Interestingly, despite this, people still love to listen to ‘small stories’ of people’s lives. So sharing our story continues to be a powerful way to engage people with the reality of faith lived out in one person’s life.



Watch [Ivan's story](#) of coming to faith and then answer [these questions](#).

SECOND CLASS STORIES

Ah but you say, my story isn't exciting. Nothing dramatic happened. It is very ordinary.

This is a common response when we talk about sharing our story of coming to faith. It is fuelled by two things.

Firstly, most of the stories we hear tend to be the dramatic ones. You know the sort. Drug addict, sex worker, criminal, successful business person who went bust in a week. And then God stepped in. They are great stories. But they make our stories look very ordinary. Yet every story is unique, every story is engaging if told well.

Secondly, we think that dramatic stories are more likely to persuade people. But in fact, whilst in some ways inspiring, they often don't connect with where most people are at. An ordinary story well told is much more relatable. People think: 'That could be my story.'

The truth is that there are no second class stories, just second class ways to tell our story.

Telling our story in an engaging way is a skill that can be learnt. And one that is worth learning because people connect with stories, especially in this age when they are more likely to be sceptical of 'truth' claims.

We are much more likely to be able to tell our story in a way that will *make sense* to a person who isn't a Christian, *honours Jesus*, and is *lively and interesting*, if we have first thought about how to tell our story, and then practised it a little.

That's what [part 2](#) is all about, three different ways to tell your story.

If you are already confident in doing this, take a look at [part 3](#) on how to tell your story well.



FOR MORE STORIES

[Hannah Steele interviews](#) Justin Welby, J. John, Jill Duff, Stephen Cottrell, Amy Orr-Ewing, Yemi Adedeji about their story and how to tell His-story.

There are a wide variety of stories to watch on the [Great Commission](#) website.

There are no
second class
stories; just second
class ways to tell
our stories.

02 HOW TO TELL YOUR STORY



STORY TIME

Some of us may have already learnt to share our 'testimony'. I certainly did early on in my faith journey. But what I have found is that I rarely get the opportunity to tell the whole story, even in its much abbreviated three minute form. For that reason it is really helpful to have a variety of ways of telling our story:

- 15 seconds.
- 45 seconds (approx. 100 words).
- 2-3 minutes.

Then you can select the relevant one for the conversation you are in.

On the following pages you'll find suggestions on how to tell your story in each of these ways. Don't try and do them all! Start with one and really hone it until it comes easily to you.

THE 15 SECOND STORY

[Steve Addison](#) explains a way of structuring a 15 second story using a framework:

- Before I became a Christian.
- How I became a Christian.
- After I became a Christian.

If you have always been a person of faith, you can use the same approach but with this framework:

- When I realised a significant thing about my faith.
- How I responded.
- The difference that has made.

Watch the video on the next page, and then use page 8 to create your own 15 second story. Spend time playing with possible words that work for your story, and then when you have decided which ones to use, write it out in full.

OTHER OPTIONS

If you already know how to tell your story in 15 seconds, take a look at [45 seconds](#) or [2-3 minutes](#).



15
SECS



Ideally link up with another Christian and practice your 15 second story in the way [Addison](#) suggests. It may sound a little contrived, but actually practising in a 'safe' environment helps develop confidence for the opportunities we will get to share it with non Christians.

INTRO

There was a
time in my
life when...

←

JESUS

→

?

Do you have a
story like that?
Or...
What's your
story?



Looking for examples? Take a look [here](#), and when you have finalised your 15 second story, please help others by sharing it on this board following the instructions at the top of the board. It is anonymous.

45
SECS

100 WORDS

This is a slightly longer way to tell your story, but is still only around 45 seconds. Here is how to construct it.

Identify a Core Theme

What is the single key concept reflected in your faith-story that is germane to the ear of someone living far from God? For example:

- Didn't believe in God's existence...
- Striving to earn my way into God's good book...
- Self destructive behaviour patterns...
- Proudly independent...
- Very fortunate in life, successful in everything, didn't want for anything...
- Confused about life...
- Lonely...
- Seeking for something but didn't know what...
- Struggling with shame/ anxiety/depression/anger...
- Religious but no relationship...

Write it Out

Describe the impact of your core concept on your life, particularly how it felt. Then describe how you came to faith, how you encountered Jesus in that place. Finally describe the difference that encounter made to your life. There is [handout](#) to help with this.

Once you have written it out once, leave it for a few days, and then come back to it with fresh eyes and see if there are any changes you want to make.

Then ask a Christian friend if you could share it with them, and ask them for any thoughts on how it could be improved.

Then you could be brave and ask a non Christian friend if you could share it with them, explaining you are trying to work out how to talk about the difference your faith has made in your life in a way that will make sense.

3

MINS



2-3 MINUTES

The final version is a slightly longer way to tell your story. It builds on the previous two. Watch one of the stories on the next three pages, and then use the following questions to reflect on what you found helpful in the story.

[Mark's story](#): brought up in a Christian home and realising there are no second class stories.

[Beth's story](#): coming to faith at University.

[Ram's story](#): from a Hindu background and a refugee from East Africa, Ram finds faith through food.

Questions to reflect on

- What was helpful in the way they told their story?
- What do you think would connect with people?
- How did they structure their story?

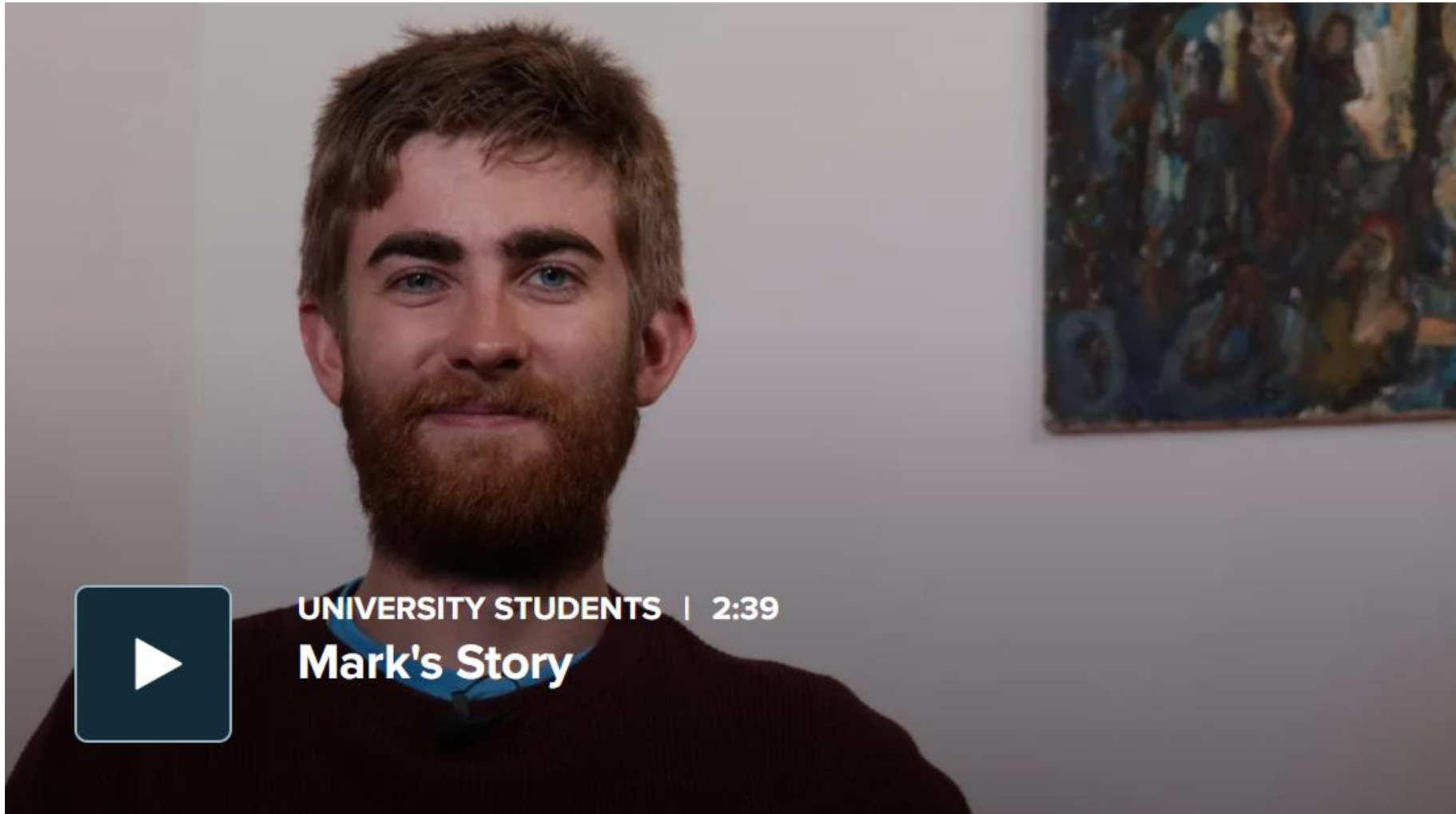
- Was any jargon used, and if so how might they have better phrased it?
- What didn't you think worked so well and how would you have done it differently?

Then having learnt from these reflections, use some of the ideas on [page 14](#) to construct your 2-3 minute story. Choose one and see how it goes. If it doesn't work for you, choose another and try that.

Work on it over several weeks, and then share it with a Christian to ask for their feedback on how you might improve it.

If you want [an alternative approach](#) to constructing your story, this one uses the flow of intro, inciting incident, rising action, climax, resolution.

3
MINS



Mark's [story](#): brought up in a Christian home and realising there are no second class stories



3
MINS



Beth's [story](#): coming to faith at University.

3
MINS



Ram's [story](#): from a Hindu background and a refugee from East Africa Ram finds faith through food.

IDEAS FOR CONSTRUCTING YOUR 2-3 MINUTE STORY

Answer some of these questions – How did you come to faith in Christ? How has life changed since knowing God? What does the good news of Jesus mean to you? How is Jesus working in your life today?

Draw three boxes, give them the titles 'what I was like before I knew Jesus', 'how I came to know Jesus' and, 'what I am like now I know Jesus'. Make the boxes different sizes according to your age or how long you have been a Christian, for example if you became a Christian a long time ago you might need a bigger box for writing about your life since getting to know Jesus.

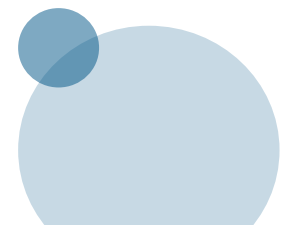
Set a timer and give yourself two minutes to write down your faith story (focus on the really important/stand out parts and maybe use bullet points). Then go back with no time limit and reflect deeper on one or two parts.

Think of your faith in bursts. As you remember key events, write them on post-it notes over a couple of days, and then shuffle the notes round into the order of your story.

Record a Vlog of yourself telling your story. Then listen back to it on several occasions, thinking about how you might better shape the story and try again. Repeat until you're happy.

Split your page in half and write on one side 'before' and on the other side 'after'. Make a list of differences and similarities in your life before and after knowing Jesus as a starting point for writing your story.

Think of your story as a time-line from date of birth to current date. Write the significant events in chronological order along the line, perhaps putting the positive events above the line and the less positive ones below. Then decide which events can best be used to tell your story of coming to faith





THINGS TO AVOID

There are some things that are likely to alienate our listeners.

- **Long windedness** Too much content, repetition. Aim for [brevity](#).
- **Fuzziness** Irrelevance, hidden assumptions. Aim for [clarity](#).
- **Jargon** Religious language, names of things. Aim for [simplicity](#).
- **Superiority** Arrogance, exaggeration, criticism of others. Aim for [humility](#).

When you read through your story check it for these things. Then ask two questions:

1. Will this make sense to a person who knows little or nothing about the Christian faith?
2. Does this highlight that knowing Jesus is good news?

CHECK IT OUT

It is hard to be objective about our story, so check it out with a Christian friend. Ask them to listen to your story. Give them this [checklist](#) so they can listen out for things that could be improved.

When they give you their feedback, don't be defensive. Adopt an enquiring attitude; 'tell me more about that.' 'Why do you think it came across like that?' Then go away and refine your story and take it back to them a few days later.

The great news is that the better we know our story, the more confident we will be. And with confidence, we should be able to relax and listen to the other person, engage with them well.

“

If we listen long enough, people will tell us where God is starting a conversation with them. We then participate in that conversation and encourage them towards Christ.

Jay Moon

”

INTRODUCING YOUR STORY

Great. Your story is ready to tell. Now what? How do we appropriately introduce it into conversations?

Pray for opportunities to share your story (Colossians 4:2-6). This is a prayer God loves to hear and in my experience is keen to answer.

Don't force it. There is a delicate balance here, as we will almost certainly need to be bold to introduce our story into a conversation. But don't be pushy, cringy, forceful, but gentle and respectful (1 Peter 3:16). One way to do this is to ask permission: 'can I tell you a little about my own spiritual experience/story?'

Be flexible in your approach. You may not get the opportunity to tell it all, but could tell part of it. Sometimes you may need to start in the middle or at the end. The better we know our story, the

more able we will be to start wherever is most helpful for the conversation we are having.

Try to link your story with something the person says.

- That's interesting, I had a similar experience....'
- I struggle with that as well and what has helped me is....
- Isn't it interesting in times like that we find out what is most important in life. For me...'

Illustrate it from daily life wherever possible. This keeps it connected and grounded.

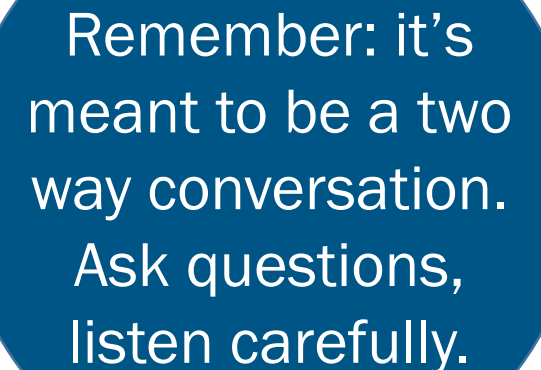
- So when I am feeling anxious...
- Knowing how much I am forgiven helps in me in forgiving others...
- When I am struggling at work...
- Having a clear sense of purpose...

Be gentle and humble, using humour if possible and appropriate.

At the end ask [questions](#) of the person about their experience:

- What's your story?
- Have you ever had a spiritual experience?
- What contact have you had with Christian things/Church?

Leave the door open for a further conversation: 'if you would ever like to chat about these things further I'd love to do that.'



Remember: it's meant to be a two way conversation. Ask questions, listen carefully.

God's story

Culture's story

Holy
Spirit

Their story

Our story

Sharing our faith is about the intersection of four stories.

- **Their story**, the story of [their lives](#). Listening carefully to this story will help us identify their *background*, what they currently *believe*, and any *barriers* to faith they may have.
- **Our story**, the story of what God has done in our lives.
- **God's story**, the [big story](#) of what God is doing in the world, focused on Jesus as King of the world.
- **Culture's story**, the story that forms how we see things in our [particular cultural context](#).

The good news is that God's Spirit is at work in all of these stories, and wants to help us when we have a conversation with someone by giving us the words to say (John). Phew! It isn't all up to us.

He simply asks us to be available, like Ananias in Acts 9 - open, honest and obedient - so that he can write us into the stories of other people's lives on their journey to faith. Here is a prayer we can use.

[Lord, please write me into other people's stories. Amen.](#)



“

Your story takes your friends on a journey from the place of perceiving that faith is about a religious world view to the place of wondering how a real relationship with God might have a real impact on someone's life. And you have a story to tell.

Phil Knox

”



BOOKS TO READ

Story Bearers, Phil Knox (IVP), especially chapter 6 on telling your story.

Living His Story, Hannah Steele (SPCK).

The Power of Story, Leighton Ford (NavPress).



WEBSITES/COURSES

[Story Bearers](#), a five session course free to download, as well as a series of [videos](#) interviewing various people about the use of story in faith sharing.

[Living His Story](#) Hannah Steele (SPCK), a seven part home group course.

[Faith Shared](#), especially [session 3](#) on where to share your story.



TALKS AND VIDEOS

[Miriam Swanson](#) explores how to tell your story with some great tips on how to introduce your story. Recorded during the pandemic.

[Great Commission](#) website has a wide range of people telling their stories of coming to faith. Scroll down to find them.



BLOGS AND GUIDES

A [downloadable resource](#) to help people construct their faith story from the London City Mission.

An [article](#) on Five Ways to Start a Conversation about Your Faith.

A [board](#) listing many resources and ideas to help people share faith.

AND FINALLY...

We'd be really grateful if you would take five minutes to complete a [feedback form](#) on this e-learning module so we can improve it for others in the future.

Thank you.



New resource for church leaders

What is evangelism was a ministry of the whole church, not just a few? This book is a straightforward guide to nurturing an evangelistic culture in your church, congregation, fresh expression or church plant.

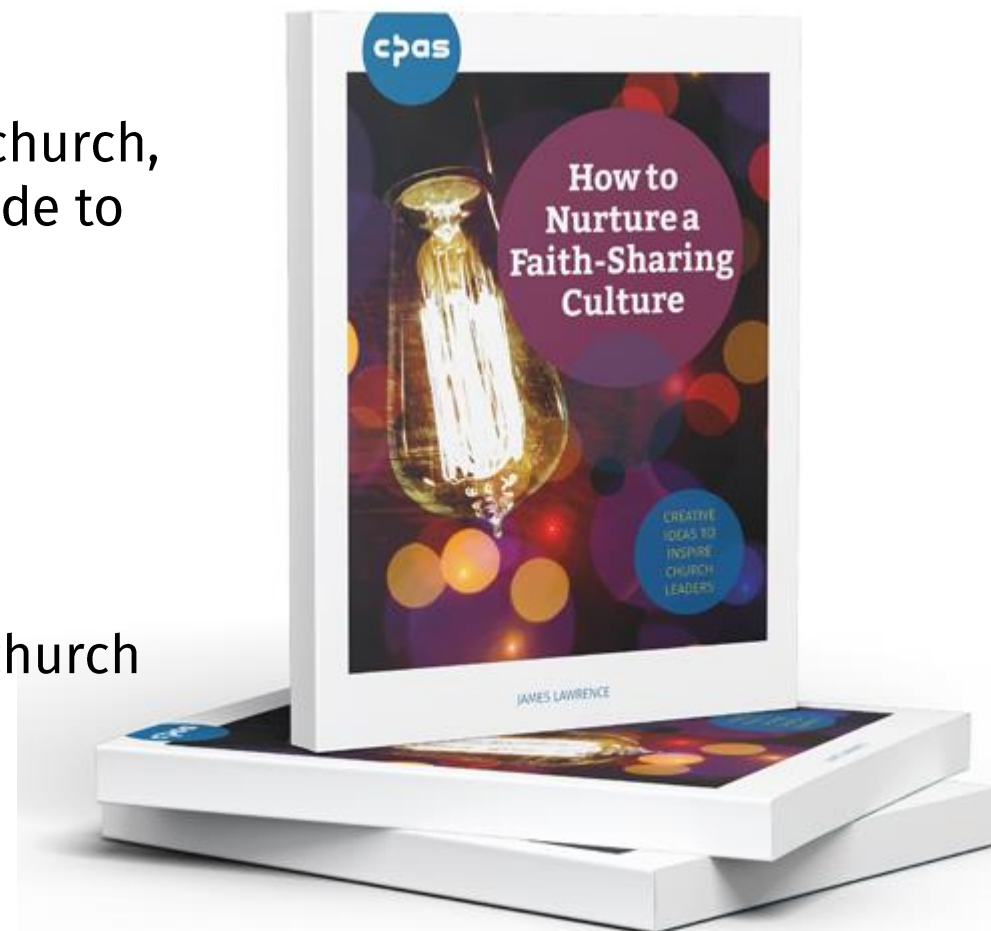
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