

Week of November 20



DAY
1

What's Your Story?

Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.
1 Thessalonians 2:8

When we share our faith, we don't just share a couple of Bible verses and leave it at that. We share our lives with others. We share about what God is doing in us, how he is changing us, how having God in our lives makes us different.

Eugene Peterson wrote, "It is significant that God does not present us with salvation in the form of an abstract truth, or a precise definition or a catchy slogan, but as story ... Story is an invitation to participate, first through our imagination and then, if we will, by faith, with our total lives in response to God."

God gives each of us a story. And our stories are important. They matter. Stories are so powerful. The Bible itself is a collection of stories about people following God. And they don't always follow him perfectly. They mess up. But we resonate with those stories. And other people need to hear our stories.

During our Cardboard Testimony Sunday service, we celebrate stories. We celebrate the good work of God in the lives of our brothers and sisters at Living Word.

Think back on this year.

What can you celebrate?

What has God done in your life this year?

How has 2022 been for you?

What new thing is God doing in your life?

DAY
2

The Wrong Stories John 4

In John chapter 4, Jesus and his disciples are traveling through Samaria. Jesus stops for a drink at a well in the middle of the day and meets a Samaritan woman. This was scandalous. In Jesus' time, not only would good Jewish rabbis have avoided talking with a Samaritan, but they wouldn't have spoken with a woman either.

Put yourself in her shoes. Imagine that you are part of a despised gender and a despised ethnic group. Even among your own people, you are an outcast. Five husbands have rejected you. You have no husband to offer you financial security or protection. Maybe you've attached yourself to a man just to make things easier. You're older. You have no children. The likelihood of someone wanted to marry you gets smaller with each passing day. You know you shouldn't be living with this man, but you have so few options in your culture.

You're tired of the gossip about you. You're tired of stares and whispers. It's easier to draw water at the hottest part of the day, when nobody is around.

And yet, here is a man who tells you your story, but doesn't shame you. He speaks plainly. He doesn't call you names. He doesn't offer commentary on how he feels about your situation. Instead, he offers to share your cup. He talks with

you like you're an equal. He gives you dignity.

When Jesus met the woman at the well, he gave her a new story. Jesus reveals to her that he is the Messiah. And she went and told other people about Jesus.

Your story might be true or it might be something you tell yourself. But Jesus wants to write a new story. Just like he crossed all kinds of boundaries to meet the woman at the well, he will cross boundaries to meet you. Let Jesus tell a new story.

DAY 3 Story Evangelism Acts 8:26-36

Phillip was curious about the Ethiopian (thanks to the Holy Spirit's leading!). He asked a question, and then he was able to tell him the story of Jesus. The Ethiopian was able to share his questions. This is a really good model for us to follow. It can be as simple as this three-step process:

- Introduce yourself.
- Ask a question.
- Swap stories.

We can start by being curious about people and curious about their stories. Only when we have been good listeners should we move into sharing our own story.

So, what is your story? How do you define it? Some of you might have a really dramatic conversion story. When you are baptized at Living Word, we ask you to write out your testimony or your story of faith and we ask questions like: What was your life like before God? What was your life like after God?

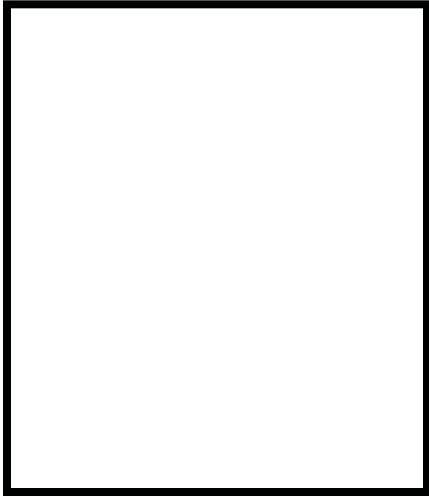
We will often have a few moments to share our story with others, so I encourage you to develop a 3-minute version of your story. When prepping your 3-minute faith story:

- Limit it to about 400 written words.
- Make it tight.
- Keep it short and simple.
- Write it out and practice.

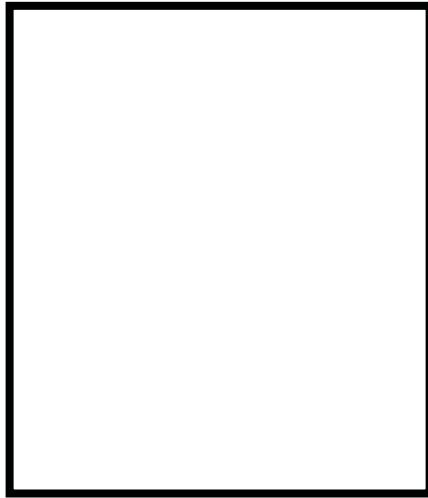
DAY 4 Your Cardboard Testimony

This week, we saw over 30 stories of God's goodness in the work of lives at Living Word. Now it's your turn! Grab a piece of paper. Imagine it's your sheet of cardboard. What would be on the front? What did your life look like before God's good work? What is on the back?

FRONT



BACK



PERSONAL REFLECTION & LIFEGROUP CONVERSATION

Can you identify different stages in the growth of your faith? What are they?

Tell about a turning point in your life and how God was involved.

Tell about a time when you felt that God's will was being made very clear to you.

Is there a Scripture passage that has become a life verse for you? Why?