

## 1-15-2025... My Testimony / Story

Two of the most powerful tools we have in sharing the Gospel are our life and our lips. Telling our story in a natural and intentional way brings together the best of both.

Paul models this beautifully In Acts 22 and Acts 26 where he shares what his life was like before becoming a Jesus follower, how committing his life to Jesus happened, and what had changed since he became a disciple of Jesus.

### Movement 1... Read the excerpts below..

**Acts 22...** "Then Paul said: <sup>3</sup> "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in the law of our ancestors. I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today. <sup>4</sup> I persecuted the followers of this Way to their death, arresting both men and women and throwing them into prison, <sup>5</sup> as the high priest and all the Council can themselves testify. I even obtained letters from them to their associates in Damascus and went there to bring these people as prisoners to Jerusalem to be punished.

<sup>6</sup> "About noon as I came near Damascus, suddenly a bright light from heaven flashed around me. <sup>7</sup> I fell to the ground and heard a voice say to me, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you persecute me?'

<sup>8</sup> "'Who are you, Lord?' I asked. 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting,' he replied. <sup>9</sup> My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.

<sup>10</sup> "'What shall I do, Lord?' I asked. 'Get up,' the Lord said, 'and go into Damascus. There you will be told all that you have been assigned to do.' <sup>11</sup> My companions led me by the hand into Damascus, because the brilliance of the light had blinded me.

<sup>12</sup> "A man named Ananias came to see me. He was a devout observer of the law and highly respected by all the Jews living there. <sup>13</sup> He stood beside me and said,

'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very moment I was able to see him.

<sup>14</sup> "Then he said: 'The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will and to see the Righteous One and to hear words from his mouth. <sup>15</sup> You will be his witness to all people of what you have seen and heard. <sup>16</sup> And now what are you waiting for? Get up, be baptized and wash your sins away, calling on his name.'

**Acts 26...**<sup>5</sup> I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee.

<sup>9</sup> "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>10</sup> And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord's people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. <sup>11</sup> Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.

<sup>12</sup> "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. <sup>13</sup> About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. <sup>14</sup> We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, [a] 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

<sup>15</sup> "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?'

"'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. <sup>16</sup> 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me.

<sup>17</sup> I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them <sup>18</sup> to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

<sup>19</sup> "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. <sup>20</sup> First to those in Damascus, then

to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds. <sup>21</sup> That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. <sup>22</sup> But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen— <sup>23</sup> that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”

... <sup>27</sup> King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.”

<sup>28</sup> Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?”

<sup>29</sup> Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.”

**Q 1.** How did Paul describe his life before Jesus?

**Q 2.** How did Paul come to believe and commit his life to Jesus?

**Q 3.** What assignment did Jesus give to Paul? How had he been fulfilling it? How did his life change?

### **MOVEMENT 2... Prepare your story / testimony.**

It's helpful to answer the 3 questions Paul addressed and be able to customize it into a short version (like you would share in an elevator), a 2-3 minute version, and a 4-5 minute version.

**Q 1.** What was your life like before committing yourself to Jesus?

**Q 2.** How did that process happen?

**Q 3.** How has your life changed as you have followed Jesus as a disciple?

### **MOVEMENT 3... Prayer**

⇒ Pray for God to line up opportunities to share your story with curious people for yourself and everyone at UGTN.org

⇒ Pray for Holy Spirit to fill you and give you courage both to live for Jesus and speak of all he has done in your life.

⇒ Pray for those impacted by Hurricane Helene, and the LA Wildfires.

### **LOGISTICS...**

⇒ Upper Room Gathering 10 a.m. this Sunday, January 19 at the Empty Cup Coffee Shop, 9111 Executive Park Dr. Knoxville, Tn 37923. We will continue experimenting with meeting @ Empty Cup, this time sharing children's ministry space with another micro church expression (<https://www.messengersknox.com/>).

⇒ Catered lunch to follow immediately after our gathering. We will keep it simple, by not doing potluck style this time.

### **BONUS...Extra Credit**

43% of the Bible is made up of stories or what is sometimes called Narrative. To better understand the Bible enjoy this 5 minute video from Bible Project.

<https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/literary-styles-bible/>