

Community Group Questions

1. What was your worldview before you became a Christian?
2. What do you feel the main reasons were that led you to trust Jesus?
3. What are some things that you would like to be known for as a Christian?

Everyone has a story and it is important for us as believers to hear one another's stories. Here are some reasons it is important...

-So we know where that person is coming from

Sometimes we are tough on others, sometimes we lack compassion and do not commiserate with them. So we judge them or look down on them. Knowing what God saved them out of may cause us to be more compassionate toward them.

-So we know how to help them minister

When we know someone's story it can help us to minister to others more effectively. For example: if you have a friend that is struggling with something that you are at a loss for helping them, there may be someone in the church that can minister to them because of what they have been through. As a pastor I feel this is why I need to know your story...it helps me help you to minister.

-So we can be encouraged by God's power

The bottom line is when we hear the stories of God's grace and power in the lives of others it is encouraging.

There are benefits for us in telling our story...

-Reminds us how Jesus showed up in our life.

-God uses us and what happened in our past to communicate His Word

-It is a great witness to non-believers...People can't argue with your experience.

So how do we tell our story? In Acts 26 we are going to learn an easy to remember outline from the Apostle Paul on how to share our story.

The background of this passage is the Paul is going before the authorities and the accusation against him is that he is preaching the Gospel of Jesus. The Jewish people saw this as heresy. Paul makes a defense of himself before King Agrippa and that defense is “his story”

Paul shares about life before he trusted Jesus.

Paul makes an appeal and states that he was a good Jewish man in **verses 1-7**

Then in verse 8 he asks the question and in the question he is implying is that the Jews that are bringing the accusation are doubting the true power of God. **Verse 8**

Then Paul in verses 9-12 he commiserates with his fellow Jews by saying yeah I felt the same way as they do and I went over and above the call of duty to stop Christians from spreading the news about Jesus. **Verses 9-12**

Why did he do this?

-So they knew where he was coming from. A Jewish Pharisee trying to do the work of God.

-So they knew why he believed what he believed. This was his mindset and his worldview to be a good Jewish man and do the work of God.

-So they knew he was still serving God and Jesus is God and going against Jesus is rejecting the very God you say that you serve.

So this is what Paul was like before Jesus showed up.

What was your life like before Jesus showed up? Were you a good religious person? Did you outwardly reject Jesus? Were you very hedonistic? Were you very materialistic? Were you rude, angry, difficult, the list goes on.

Now when you write your story focus in on what was important to you before you trusted in Jesus, how that was wrong or got in the way. What was your purpose or what did you live for? How did you live?

The next thing Paul shares is...

How Jesus showed up.

On his way to persecute the church, Jesus showed up in a bright light
Vrs 13-14a

Listen to what Jesus said...**verse 14b**

What??

First, the ox-goad is a long pole or stick with a pointed piece of iron fastened to one end. The ox is gently prodded, guided, steered and driven in the desired direction when plowing the fields. When a stubborn ox attempts to kick back against the goad that is causing it discomfort, the ox will actually inflict more pain, driving the pointed end deeper into its flesh.

Second, the ox-goad is designed for an ox, and for no other beast. When Jesus likened the proud Pharisee Saul to a brute beast, Saul's heart likely pounded with incredible indignation. By birth a Jew, by citizenship a Roman, by education a Greek, Saul was a Pharisee of Pharisees. He sat at the top of the spiritual ladder in Jerusalem, and now Jesus of Nazareth was comparing him to an animal! (cited Tommy Boland)

So this kicking the goads refers to the futility of his persecuting the church.

Paul asks who is saying this and Jesus said its me. **Vrs 15**

It is like Jesus saying you think you are doing the work of God but you are harming others and yourself. I am the one you should be serving not persecuting

Jesus gives Paul his mission. **Vrs 16-17**

Paul specifically was called to minister to Gentiles

Now in verse 18 Jesus tells Paul the effects of the **Verse 18 GOSPEL**

What were the events that led you to trust in Jesus? Was it a church, a person, troubled times, good times? Reading the Word? Were you kicking at the goads?

When you are writing your story try to reflect on how God brought you to that moment in time.

Just a reminder Paul had a specific calling at his conversion, but we as believers have the general calling to be His witnesses...specific callings may at times come when a person becomes a Christians but it is more common that God reveals that later.

When I became a Christian I knew to tell others that they can be a Christian as well. Then my specific calling to pastoral ministry came later.

What Paul does next is he tells the King what...

Life after trusting Jesus has been like

Paul's life is an example of obedience to Jesus **Vrs 19-23**

I love what Paul says *1 Cor. 15:10* *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked*

harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

At this point, by way of encouragement this could be the most exciting part of your story...because its still being written. Some of you may get discouraged because you don't have amazing salvation stories, maybe you became a Christian at 5 years old.

What has life been like as Christian? What are some highlights? What are some struggles? What have you been doing to serve? Has anyone around you become a Christian?

Here is what I want you to do...write your story. Do the best you can deal with these three points...

What was your life like before you trusted Jesus?

How Jesus showed up?

What has life been like since you trusted in Jesus?