

Everyone Has a Story

Everyone's story can be understood in terms of the the four parts of the gospel story: Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration.

- Our *Creation* story has to do with our identity: Who I believe I am or what I am meant to be.
- Our *Fall* story has to do with our problem: What I believe is wrong with me or the world.
- Our *Redemption* story has to do with our solution: What I believe needs to happen to make things right
- Our *Restoration* story has to do with our ultimate hope: The state of affairs that I believe will provide meaning or satisfaction.

Questions for Discovering a Person's Story:

	Creation	Fall	Redemption	Restoration
Questions for Discovering a Person's Story	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do they assume the world should be like? • What kind of person would they like to be? • Who are their heroes? • What would have to be in place for them to be happy? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do they describe their struggles and battles? • What do they feel is their most pressing problem? • What do they feel they lack? • What or who do they think is responsible? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do they think will make life better? • What provides a sense of escape or release? • Who or what will deliver their hopes? • What are their functional saviors? 	

The True Gospel Story to Point People to:

	Creation	Fall	Redemption	Restoration
The True Story	We are made in God's image to reflect his glory, to love God, and to love others	We have rebelled against God's rule, but our self-rule leads to conflict, slavery, and judgment	God restores his rule by sending his Son and graciously enables us to live under his rule by paying the price of our judgement on the cross	God will recreate this broken world when Jesus returns and we will live for his glory, love him, and love others

Tips:

- Ask questions to discover the story that is shaping a person's life
- Identify points of intersection with the true gospel story (common ground)
- Share how you can relate to their story (if you can), and how the truth of the gospel has made a difference in your life
- Help them to see how their 'redeemer' will let them down
- Point them to Jesus as a better redeemer
- Look for windows of opportunity to talk about Jesus: when people ask for advice, ask for confirmation (don't you agree?), complain/lament

Sample Stories—Fallen and Redeemed:

The "Fallen Stories" below represent a person's distorted view of life and the world. The "Redeemed Stories" represent the true gospel story as it relates to that person's particular situation. As you discern a person's "Fallen Story" you can begin to show them how the gospel is good news. You can show them how their "redeemer" will let them down and how Jesus is the better redeemer.

	Creation	Fall	Redemption	Restoration
Job - Fallen Story	I am meant to have a job that meets my needs, makes me successful, brings me fulfillment and gives me value.	My job doesn't provide what I need it to - no one values me at work, it isn't fun, or I just lost my job	If I get a new job, everything will be better. Or, if I just got a raise or promoted, I would be happy because I would be valued	I will be happy when I have a new job, get paid more, am in the position I want, or can provide for my family
Job - Redeemed Story	Your value lies in who God made you to be. Work is a part of what you do that flows out of who you are	You can't work perfectly. Bible says man will always toil in work. Work can not fulfill you or make you happy.	Jesus has done all of the work necessary to ensure your success.	God approves of you based on Jesus' work, not yours. When you trust his love and acceptance apart from work, you are freed to work as a means for provision only not value.

	Creation	Fall	Redemption	Restoration
Weight Loss - Fallen Story	I was created to be beautiful, to have the perfect body and for people to love me because of what I look like	I am overweight, my clothes don't fit, I'm ugly	If I lose weight, I will be beautiful again and people will love and accept me	Once my body is the perfect size, I will be happy
Weight Loss - Redeemed Story	I was created by God himself. I am intricately and wonderfully made. God had purpose in making me and he accepts me as I am.	I turn to food to bring me satisfaction. Instead of going to God for comfort, joy and satisfaction, I go to food. OR - my body image defines who I am. How I feel about myself determines my value.	Jesus offers his perfect body to replace my imperfect one. I am valued and loved because I am his, and because he is beautiful. He is the one who makes me beautiful!	God accepts me and approves of me based on Jesus' beauty. I am not God nor is anyone else. So what he thinks is most important. And he does not judge me based on my external beauty but my internal beauty. One day I will receive the perfect body!
Parenting - Fallen Story	My kids were made to obey me and perform well. How they act is a reflection of me and therefore defines who I am.	My kids disobey and don't perform well. So there is something wrong with them that I must fix.	If I discipline them better, if I learn more, if I get help, if they excel in school or on the field, then they will be perfect and I will feel good.	Everything will be right when my kids meet my expectations.
Parenting - Redeemed Story	Kids are made in the image of God. God makes them with unique gifts and talents for his world.	Because of sin, they are selfish and often disobey. They are no different than their parents.	Jesus has obeyed the father perfectly, and kids get his right standing when they trust him. Jesus accepts and loves them based on his merit.	When parents and kids see their equality as equally broken and equally redeemed, it frees the parents to enjoy their children and see them as part of God's plan rather than the child being part of the parent's plan.

Putting Together Your Gospel Story

Remember, YOUR story is a part of the ULTIMATE Story—God’s Story. Even though you are telling your story here, it should end up more focused on God and how Jesus rescued and saved you. You should not end up looking like the hero in this story—God should be the hero!

CREATION

How did your life begin? Where were you born? Tell briefly about your family, parents, how many brothers and/or sisters you have and what really began to shape who YOU were becoming as a person before you began to be a disciple of Jesus.

***The Key Question here is:** Who or What most shaped who you thought you were, and where you got your real value and “identity” in life from?*

Tell a little bit about what shaped you into the person you were becoming. Something that gave you your “identity”, something really good or really bad that happened early in your life. The influence of good or bad friends, music and films... a particular group of friends etc.

FALL

What was happening in your life that was “broken”—NOT the way God created it and you to be? Relationships? Health? Respect for parents, teachers, your self? What types of sins were you falling into and what were the effects of this? Be sure to include specific sins from your life (*behaviors and attitude sins*). What types of things (other than trusting God) did you try to use to “fix” your life...but they didn’t work? Include something you had been looking to “save” you in your life that ultimately failed.

***The Key Question here is:** Why was your relationship with God and others (and anything else in your life) NOT the way it was supposed to be? (Like God created it...)*

Who or what were you ultimately blaming this on when you came to realize it was really your own sin that had messed everything up?

REDEMPTION

Explain how the sins you mentioned above, and the effects of these sins in your life, were rescued and redeemed by Jesus. Connect specific sins to specific parts of the Story of God and how Jesus’ life, death and resurrection have redeemed and restored those parts of your life back to the way God created them to be.

***The Key Question is:** How has Jesus paid the penalty for your sins (when He died on the Cross) and how you came to put your faith and trust in Him to save you and restore your life to the way God intended it to be?*

Be sure to include how you came to find out about and know Jesus, and place your trust in Him and receive his forgiveness and new life.

RESTORATION

What is happening in your life now? God has redeemed you from the penalty of your sins and is now restoring you from the affects of past sins. How is God changing you, using you, speaking to you now?

***The Key Question here is:** What has changed and is changing in your life now? AND... Who and what is the focus of your life today?*

Be sure to include at least two examples of how the Gospel (Jesus at work in your life) is changing and restoring your life, relationships (with God and others) or any other part of your life that is being restored. This is where the Good News of the Gospel and what Jesus has done shows up in your everyday life. Also include a little about your hope in eternal life...now you will live forever with Jesus!

Story Tips:

- Make your story about 3-5 minutes long
- Don't get "preachy" or "churchy" in your story, but tell your real story
- Use normal, every day language to tell your story
- Keep God and Jesus the "main characters" in your story...don't focus on how "bad" you were and all the things you did wrong—make Jesus look awesome in your story!
- Practice telling your story with close friends and family so you will be prepared when needed
- Don't worry about what others will think of your story—remember—it's YOUR story, they can't really argue with what has happened in your life ☺
- Don't try and tell every single truth about God or the Bible in your story. Let people ask questions as you go or at the end and then fill in the details
- Pray silently to God before and during the telling of your story, asking Him to make sense of it to others and to use your life and story for His glory—God is the one who changes people!

Good Opportunities to Tell Your Story:

- When your relationship with someone goes beyond superficial
- When friends start to ask you questions about your life and past
- When someone asks you a "spiritual" or "religious" question
- When Jesus or church or religion comes up in conversation
- When a friend is having hard times or serious life problems
- When someone is curious about why you are different or seem to be at peace
- When you feel like you are getting more serious in a relationship and you want to test where the other person is at in their beliefs
- When God (through the Spirit) is prompting you to share your faith with someone...your story is a PERFECT way to start!