



SHARE YOUR STORY

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The Roman Empire was all about roads! They built about 75,000 miles of roads (3 times the circumference of the earth!) to move armies, trade goods, and civilians as efficiently as possible. Engineers drained marshes, fell forests, cut into mountains, built bridges across rivers, and more in order to build the straightest roads possible, aligning along ridges and watersheds wherever possible, usually changing direction sharply at the high points.

They were built on solid foundations, with cambered surfaces to facilitate drainage, and covered with pavers or a type of concrete (made from volcanic ash). The Empire provided regular security patrols and built rest stops or inns every 10 miles.

Britain's first proper roads were built by the Romans.

These roads were also key to the early spread of the Gospel message, as long distance travel was relatively convenient and safe.

The Roman Road

There is one particular Roman Road with which I'd like you to become familiar, because it can make your journey of making disciples for Jesus efficient and effective. It's not a physical road, but a literary one, that winds through Paul's Letter to the Church in Rome. Because it's all contained in a single book of the New Testament, it requires very little page turning, which can be distracting to a listener. Yet, the seven stops we'll make along this road express the heart of the Gospel message.

If you find it useful, I suggest that you choose one copy of the New Testament that can easily be carried in your pocket or purse, or use a digital copy on your phone—one that you can highlight, to make the "rest stops" easy to find.

For example, the first stop on the Roman Road is Romans 3:23. Highlight the verse to make it instantly visible. Then write in the margin the address of the next stop ("6:23"), so you don't have to refer to a separate list or rely solely on your memory.

You could just copy the list of Scripture verses to a single page, but that would have less impact, because it loses the context of the surrounding verses. (How many of you have already scanned some of the other verses on the screen besides the highlighted one? See how they add context to make the highlighted verse more sensible and believable?)

Let's take a quick journey up this road to see how it all fits together to express the Gospel message in a nutshell.

Romans 3:23 - *For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard.*

This verse identifies the universal need of humanity—regardless of culture, language, age, or gender: we are incapable of saving ourselves by any stretch of imagination or effort. The future cannot erase the past, and our past is marked by our shortfalls.

The words translated as “sin” (both in Hebrew and in Greek) literally mean “to miss the mark.” Picture an archer who sets his arrow, pulls back the bowstring, and aims for the bullseye... but when he releases the arrow, it misses the mark. Whether by an inch or by a mile, he has missed the mark for which he aimed—that is the definition of sinning.

“We all fall short...” We want to do the right thing, we mean to do the right thing, but we waffle and do the wrong thing anyway.

When we arrive at the next stop, 6:23, we discover that missing the mark morally is very costly.

Romans 6:23 - *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Most people who measure their chance of going to Heaven after they die, lean on what they have earned through their good deeds, and hope the good will outweigh the bad.

Sins do, indeed, earn wages; they are not inconsequential. And the wages you earn is nothing short of death. Sin is a terminal condition. It is a fatal disease.

But in this verse, the “wages of sin” are contrasted with the “free gift of God.” One is earned, but the other is altogether undeserved. This gift is absolutely free—from the start, all the way to the end.

It is free to you and me because its price was paid in full on our behalf by Christ Jesus the Lord. There is nothing we can do to gain eternal life—only trust Christ Jesus as our Savior and thank Him for the gift.

This is amazing news! But how did Jesus do it? How did He pay our debt to provide eternal life? The next stop on the road reveals it...

Romans 5:8 - *But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.*

This was an act of love for us, by God Himself! He sent Jesus to purchase our pardon and bring us home to God by dying for us—in our place—even when we were still sinning and unrepentant. What greater love could there be?

So what should our response be? When someone so earnestly declares their love to you, will you ignore it?

Romans 10:9-10 - *If you openly declare that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by openly declaring your faith that you are saved.*

Reciprocating God's love by openly declaring your allegiance to Jesus is a powerful response to make. Especially when it is based on the confidence that He is alive to hear your announcement—raised from the dead by God's mighty power.

When you trust what God has done in raising up His Son, He is pleased. Your confidence is counted by God as righteousness—it puts you in right standing with God, as if you had never sinned.

And your declaration of faith seals the deal!

Declaration and confidence, confidence and declaration. It's a powerhouse combination that will change your life!

Romans 10:13 - *For "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

This verse reveals that God doesn't play favorites. The Good News is for everyone. Anyone—no matter your background, no matter your past—who calls on Him as Savior will be heard and accepted.

It's not what you can bring to the table to prove yourself worthy; it's the worthiness of Jesus who has already done everything required to redeem and save you. Trust Him for it. Call on Him for it.

What's the sure result?

Romans 8:1 - *So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.*

If you've given your life to Jesus Christ, then you belong to Him, and He cares for His own.

All your real guilt—whether felt or ignored—and all the shame that you have carried... have been taken away! As far as the east is from the west. God has hurled your sins into the depths of the sea.

You need no longer dread the judgment to come, for He who saved you will not condemn you. You are now His beloved, and He is your Savior. He has set His love on you, and He will never leave you, nor abandon you.

How long is “never”? The final stop on the Roman Road clinches it for us.

Romans 8:38-39 - *And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Stuck like glue! He has inscribed your name on the palm of His hand—like an indelible tattoo.

Have you been afraid of death? Or afraid of life? No more!

Angels and demons cannot interfere.

Your fears of what may happen today, your worries about what may happen tomorrow—all are powerless to sever this relationship with the Savior.

Nothing above or beneath, nothing in all of creation will EVER be able to separate us from the love that God has revealed to us in the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nothing. Ever.

So, that's the Good News in a nutshell. That's His story! It's a wonderful story. It's the old, old story—far removed in time from our day.

In order to give it a contemporary context that people living today can relate to, you must interweave His Story with your story.

What's Your Story?

If your story is anything like mine, it's easy to get bogged down with details that aren't nearly as meaningful to your listeners. Why?

Because most people are mostly interested in their own story.

You probably think your own story is full of marvelous details—providence, miracles, interventions, rescues, and recovery—but it's of most interest to *YOU*, for in the retelling, you also relive the thrills and joys.

Your listeners, not so much.

Every single encounter I have had with God is exciting to me, and meaningful (even if I have no words to explain it). Yet, to others, it may seem confusing or just boring—information that doesn't seem to apply to them.

And the way my memory works (or stumbles), I don't always recall things in chronological order, which can add to the confusion.

So learn to summarize the most significant elements of your "faith story" in a simple, orderly fashion (you can always expand and embellish, when appropriate).

I suggest a simple three-point outline. It's SO SIMPLE, that you can easily memorize it and never again lose your way in telling your story, even if you get interrupted, and have to complete it at a later date. Here it is:

- Life before Jesus
- How I found Jesus
- Life with Jesus now

Life before Jesus

This is not a timeline or a personal history. If there's a detail from your past—your relationships or experiences—that is likely to connect with your listener, tell that (and leave the rest for another day).

The aim of this point of your story is to set the scene for the positive changes Jesus has made in your life, by exposing (in mostly general terms) the negative elements of your "life without Jesus." Think: loneliness, selfishness, pride, feelings of guilt or shame, fear, uncertainty, aimlessness. The external details are less important than expressing your internal feelings of lostness.

You only need enough detail for your listener to connect and relate to your experience. Choose the details that will accomplish that best, and drop the rest.

Don't major in this area of your story, lest you glorify your sins and minimize your Savior. Tell your story in such a way that Jesus is clearly the Hero (not the church, not the pastor, and not yourself).

It's easier than you might imagine to emphasize the story of your life as a lost person (which you are keenly familiar with) and then skim over your relationship with Christ today (maybe because you're keenly aware of its deficits). Watch out for this. Make Jesus the Hero of your story!

How I found Jesus

Use your best storytelling abilities to tell where you were and what happened to convert your resisting to receiving, your skepticism to surrender.

Was there a climax of misery that made you willing to change your mind? Did you find yourself trapped in a situation from which you could find no escape?

Was it in a church service? Or, on your living room couch? Were you at a concert with a friend?

Was it someone's testimony that turned your attention to Jesus? Or, was it something you read in the Bible?

Try to draw a picture with words that transports your listener to the scene.

Tell them briefly about the moment of change—Did you say a certain prayer? What changed? How did you know that Jesus heard you? How did He touch you with His love and kindness?

Life with Jesus now

So what? What difference has Jesus made in your day-to-day life?

Sure, everything is not complete yet, and your behavior isn't perfect. Admit that. Don't try to oversell Jesus. Just be clear about the ways in which you have begun to change—your thinking, your believing, your values, your priorities, your feelings, your reactions, and your behavior.

What are the qualities of Jesus that you most enjoy? Say that, and tell why. Remember, He's the Hero of your story.

How does the church family fit into your new life? How could Jesus and the church serve your friend? Gently suggest it to them.

You know how they say, “One man’s junk is another man’s treasure”? This is equally true of the inner life of your soul.

If you are willing to be vulnerably transparent about your mistakes, as well as your discoveries, others will find their own treasures in your story.

His Story – Your Story

And there will be times when God will use your story to tell His story.

So, overlay the three points of your personal story on the seven Scriptures of the Roman Road, like this...

Life before Jesus	{	Romans 3:23
		Romans 6:23
		Romans 5:8
How I found Jesus	{	Romans 10:9-10
		Romans 10:13
Life with Jesus now	{	Romans 8:1
		Romans 8:38-39

In this way, you can intertwine the elements of your story and the verses from His, because, after all, your story is, in fact, a piece of His. Your story makes unfamiliar Scriptures more appealing, while the truth of those Scriptures makes your story more compelling. And the personal elements of your story illustrate the Scriptural truths of Christ’s great story.

Work on this. Even a little effort on your part will produce good results. The more familiar you become with this simple plan, the more readily you will recognize an open door in the conversation. When an opportunity presents itself, you’ll know where you want to go, and can manage questions and interruptions without losing your way.

For your part, you need only to be willing and obedient (but preparation and a plan will boost your confidence and effectiveness).

Remember: your story is someone else’s miracle!