

Are We Prepared to Share Our Faith Stories?

We are interested in stories of spiritual journey. These stories pull us beyond ourselves and help us realize that we are called to more than our ordinary everyday lives. Many people are hesitant, however, to discuss their own spiritual journeys. Although these experiences are the most significant parts of our lives, we feel others will give them little credence. We are shy and uncomfortable sharing our faith stories because this requires trust and intimacy and a level of emotional, intellectual and spiritual confidence we may not feel we have.

We need to overcome our shyness because sharing our faith stories is crucial to our growth as Christians in community.

As we tell our stories, we recognize and affirm our unique identities and how God is acting in our lives. We learn about ourselves by telling about ourselves. And others in our community may help recognize and affirm our unique gifts and experiences. Hearing the stories of others helps us to broaden our perspectives and recognize even greater possibilities for ourselves. Faith sharing helps us to discern the meaning and purpose of our lives.

Recalling our faith stories gives us strength and can bring healing and renewal, especially when we are experiencing uncertain or difficult times. I affirm that God has been with me (in good and trying times) and still is. Others can gain strength and meaning from my stories as I gain strength and meaning from theirs. "Take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children" (Deuteronomy 4:9).

Listening to one another is supportive and loving and begins to build an intimate and trusting community by fostering understanding and respect among us. In a climate of faith, friendship and love, we can begin to discern where God is calling us individually and as a community and to articulate common understandings that our community can build upon. We begin to connect each of our own stories with the community's story and with God's sacred story and this helps us to grow in relationship as a community of disciples.

As we improve our ability to share our personal and communal stories with others, we also improve the evangelism skills we will use to invite others into our communities. Faith stories are more effective evangelism tools than belief statements or theologies; stories about God's love often connect better with a person's search for meaning. Recognizing that the Holy Spirit grows our faith, we need to do our part in planting and watering – and begin by telling others what God is doing in our lives.

Sharing our faith stories is an essential part of becoming Christians. It helps us appreciate and become more aware of our journey with Christ. Jesus tells us that he is present with us when we live in and proclaim his name. Imagine sharing the Good News of the joy of your faith and, in that sharing, having Jesus powerfully present in and through you!

For all of these reasons, sharing our faith stories is one of the most important ways for us to grow into disciples who help Jesus make disciples. Each of us needs to take opportunities we are given to share our faith stories. We can become better at faith sharing by:

- Praying for opportunities and courage to share our faith.
- Covenanting with a spiritual guide or a trusted friend to meet and mentor each other in the faith.
- Keeping a journal to write our thoughts about what God is doing in our lives.
- Participating in a small group, such as a Bible study or prayer group, to grow in faith sharing.
- Participating in new member classes, catechumenal programs, gifts discernment courses or retreats, which often include opportunities for faith sharing.
- Emphasizing faith sharing as a part of our family life! My family especially enjoys the conversations that begin with the games *Faith Talk for Children* and *Lifestories*.

We can each begin preparing ourselves to answer the question: What does my faith have to do with my life?