

# ELEMENT STUDENT MINISTRY



**KNOW  
YOUR  
STORY**

**SHARE  
YOUR  
STORY**

## How To Write & Deliver Your Story

[www.elementstudentministry.com/story](http://www.elementstudentministry.com/story)

## SECTION I - WRITING YOUR STORY

### Step 1 - Pray

With any talk you give or story you share, prayer is the first and most important thing you should do. Before you write anything down or decide what you're going to say, pray.

Ask God to speak through you and that everything you say may glorify God. Pray specifically for the topic you are speaking on. Ask God to help you connect to your peers and for God to remind you that you are going to do a great job!! Make sure that as you pray and reflect to look over the scripture that connects to your talk.

### Step 2 - Identify Your Story. *\*\*Adapted from Doug Fields "True Story"*

Everyone has a story. Let's hear yours.

**Faith stories are exciting because they're true.** Even if they don't include action movie-making material, they reveal that God has been at work in your life.

Think of it this way. Your faith story reveals . . .

- . **what** you believe
- . **where** you've been
- . **how** God is working in your life, and
- . **why** you choose to follow Jesus.

It's fun to flip through old photo albums at home because they remind us of places we've been, people we love, and help us understand how our life has been shaped. The same happens when we take time to identify our faith story. It reveals God's blessings in the good and God's faithfulness in the not-so-good.

**Everyone has a faith story, even those who haven't trusted Jesus... yet.** While Christians can identify how Jesus first grabbed their attention and what he is teaching them, non-Christians can share what they think about Jesus, the church, and other Christians.

*That's the beauty of identifying your story – because **everyone has one!***

Better yet, no one can dismiss your story, because it's YOUR STORY. When someone hears about your journey with Jesus, it immediately proves that God is real and alive in your life. And when those without faith share their story, it helps those of us with faith, to better understand what we can and should do as the body of Christ.

**“But what if I grew up in a Christian home and can't remember a time I didn't believe?”**

**Good question! Easy answer!** Simply share how that period of time either helped or hindered your spiritual growth. Was there ever a time you doubted God, or a time when you wanted more of God in your life? Was there a particular event or step of faith that helped you gain a greater understanding of who God is? Most likely, yes. Great! Share about those times.

Maybe even more important than a “when” is a “what.” **What** is God doing in your life today? The Christian faith isn't a one-time event. It's an ongoing relationship with the God of the universe. So, **what are you learning today?** What's the condition of your heart? How has Jesus kept you focused on following him . . . or do you have a tendency to drift or get bored with spiritual matters? Let these questions help you identify your story.

**Action Step: IDENTIFY** which story to tell (how you met Jesus or a recent growth story)

You only have one salvation story, the time you said “yes” to putting your faith in what Jesus did on the Cross. But, most likely, you’ve got several growth stories. A growth story identifies a time you trusted Jesus, or were challenged by God, or by another follower of Jesus. Your story can even be about a time when you didn’t trust God, or when you had significant spiritual doubts. There’s no perfect example – it’s simply a snapshot of what God is doing in your life.

**“Which story should I share?”**

It all depends on what you want to accomplish. Both types of faith stories are valuable. Consider the possible benefits of each:

**Salvation Story (how you came to Jesus)**

- . Gives hope to non-Christians (shows them the power of Jesus’ love for them)
- . Encourages Christians (reminds them of their own salvation)
- . Reminds you of God’s goodness (everyone needs a reminder)
- . Gives the “big picture” of your life (includes your life before Jesus and your life now)

**Growth Story (what God has been teaching you lately)**

- . Shows non-Christians that God is real to you (He’s alive and at work today)
- . Motivates Christians (a reminder that God cares about the details of life)
- . Holds you accountable (encourages you to “walk the talk” amongst the body of Christ )
- . Gives a “snapshot” of your life (this is what’s happening now)
- . Shows a realistic side to the Christian faith (reveals the bumps and bruises all Christians experience)

**“Can I combine my salvation story with a growth story?”**

Of course. But, because time is often a factor (an average testimony is usually 6 minutes), it's best to pick one type of story in order to stay focused. (See “Things To Avoid” on page 7 for more clarification).

**Step 3: Prepare Your Story.** *\*\*Adapted from Doug Fields "True Story"*

Questions to get you thinking.

**My Salvation Story = BEFORE + HOW + AFTER**

**BEFORE** you met Jesus.

- What issues did you wrestle with?
- What were your thoughts about Christians, God, the Bible, and church?
- What were you doing with your life?
- In which direction were you headed?
- How did you feel?

**HOW** you met Jesus.

This part is critical because non-Christians need to know that it's simple to develop a relationship with Jesus. They need to realize that they don't need money, a church membership, a perfect past, or follow a dress code in order to trust Jesus.

- What was said?
- Who told you about Jesus?
- Where were you?
- What were you thinking?
- How were you feeling?
- What did you say or pray?

**AFTER** putting your faith in Jesus.

Important: Be honest! Don't think you have to make your life look neat and pretty. You won't hurt Jesus' reputation if you admit you still struggle. Even in the midst of your struggles, Jesus can teach you incredible things, so share what you've learned and where you hope to be as you follow Jesus every day.

**My Growth Story = ISSUE + LESSON + RESPONSE**

**Issue**

- What ISSUE or QUESTION have you been struggling with?
- What’s been going on in your life that God is using to challenge or stretch you?
- In what ways have you been stumbling in your walk with Christ?

**Lesson**

- What LESSON did you learn from your issue/question?
- What insight from the Bible did God give you, or what friend encouraged you?
- What have you learned, or in what way have you grown since the issue/question first presented itself?

**Response**

- What RESPONSE is God calling for?
- Or what RESPONSE do you need from your listeners?
- If there was a definite lesson God taught you, how does he want you to live now?
- If there hasn’t been an answer yet, how do you want others to pray for you?
- Could your response challenge others to grow?

**DON'T MISS THIS!**

Whichever story you choose, put the bulk of your material in the middle section: the “how” or “lesson” part. Why? Many people focus too much on what life was like before Jesus or on the issue they’re struggling with, and it can overwhelm the audience. The listener needs to hear HOW you came to know Jesus and/or what LESSON God taught you. Everyone can relate to life outside of Jesus, but people need to get a clear picture of the kind of hope Jesus offers.

**Practically speaking . . .**

Aim to have 50% of your story focus on the middle section (“how” or “lesson”) with the remaining 50% split between the other two sections.

Time			How or Lesson		
		Before or Issue		After or Response	
		25%	50%	25%	
	Testimony Section				

**Action Step: PREPARE your story**

Use the statements below for ideas to get you started. They're only there to guide you, so don't feel limited by them or required to use them.

**Salvation Story**

**My salvation story = BEFORE + HOW + AFTER**

**Before I had a relationship with Jesus . . .**

- . Tell us how you thought, acted, felt.
- . Describe what or who you put your faith in – or what you trusted for security (friends, money, relationships, career, school, achievement, etc.).
- . Share your views on God, the Bible, the church, and Christians.
- . What was your hope for the future?

**How I began my relationship with Jesus . . .**

- . Describe what happened that revealed you needed Jesus.
- . Who told you about Jesus? What were the circumstances? How long did it take you to make a decision to trust Jesus?
- . What did you do or say in order to trust Jesus?
- . Tell us your immediate thoughts and feelings after putting your faith in Jesus.

**After I began my relationship with Jesus . . .**

- . What were your first days and months like as a new Christian?
- . What is your life like now?
- . What questions were answered for you? What questions remain?
- . How do you now feel about God, the Bible, church, and other Christians?
- . What is the biggest difference in your life now that you're a Christian? Your biggest joy? Biggest fear?
- . Is there a particular Bible verse that helped you?
- . If you were talking to your younger self, what main point would you want him/her to walk away with?
- . WHY does your talk matter? In other words, don't just share ideas, share why these ideas might change someone's faith or someone's life.

## Growth Story

### My growth story = ISSUE + LESSON + RESPONSE

#### Issue

- . What question or life issue troubled you? Why was it an issue?
- . How did the issue/question affect you? How did it affect your relationship with God? How did it affect your other relationships or activities?

#### Lesson

- . What was the process you went through to deal with the issue/question?
- . Who helped you during that time (friend, family member, pastor, Bible, etc.)?
- . What conclusion did you come to?
- . What did you learn about yourself, God, others, the church, etc.?

#### Response

- . As a result of your lesson, how do you plan to continue moving forward in your relationship with God?
- . What surprised you (good or bad) during the lesson?
- . How can we pray for or care for you?
- . Is there a particular Bible verse that helped you?
- . If you were talking to your younger self, what main point would you want him/her to walk away with?
- . WHY does your talk matter? In other words, don't just share ideas, share why these ideas might change someone's faith or someone's life.
- .

*\*\*Please remember that the above outline and ideas within the outline are absolutely suggestions! Feel free to move things around, add new elements or not even use this outline.*

### Step 4 - A Blank Slate

Grab a blank sheet of paper. Write at the center of the paper ME + GOD. Now go old school and start doing a "web" of all the stories and moments of your life that connect with your talk. Look for patterns that can help frame your story.

*After this, it's time to start writing!*

**THINGS TO AVOID!**

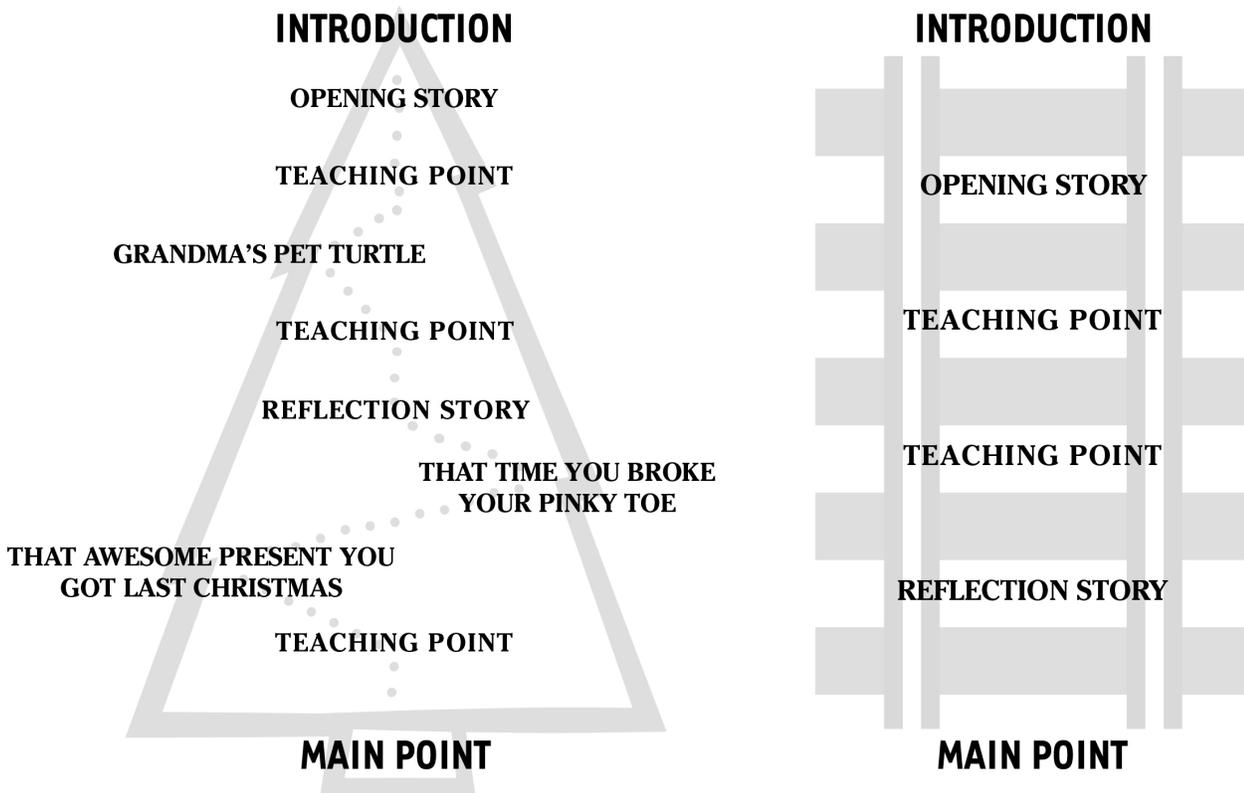
- *Heresy: In other words, don't say things that are against our beliefs. A great example, "Jesus really wasn't real you guys..."*
- *Distractors: Distractors are things might cause the audience to get "stuck" on something you say and miss your next point.*

**1. Insider Distractions**

- *Avoid saying things like "you all know that passage in the Bible." Someone in the audience may not know that story or the Bible as a whole that well and might then feel on the outside or that this talk doesn't apply to them if they don't already know something about it.*
- *Avoid Shoutouts. Shoutout are always fun, but only for those on the inside of the story or shoutout. Everyone else is left wondering what the whole story is, or who you're talking about. In other words, either fully explain the story or share who the person is (aka relationship/role/title to you) as long as it fits in your talk. Otherwise, save it for another time.*

**2. Christmas Tree Distractors**

- *I will be the first to admit that I LOVE to talk and share stories. However, when you're giving a talk, you want to make sure that everything you share during this time points the audience to the main point or idea you set out to share. As you continue to write drafts of your talk, make sure it looks like a straight path, and not a Christmas Tree. These additional stories are great, but thy might not be needed for THIS talk. Save them for another time! **See Diagram Below:***



### Step 5 - Formatting Your Story

As you first begin writing your story, a great rule of thumb for making sure you “hit” the appropriate time length is by a simply formatting trick:

Format your document to 1” margins, 12 point font, double-spaced.

For every page at this format, you should read aloud that page in 2 MINUTES.

In other words, 1 Page (at specified format) = 2 Minutes When Delivered.

Now, to some of you, that 2 minutes may seem like an eternity but remember, your audience is hearing your story for the FIRST TIME, which means they need time to think through and process the information as you give it.

Once you have achieved the right page length (aka the approximate amount of time) on your talk, feel free to format it however you want.

Make the font bigger, make headers or bullet points, make it 1.5 spacing instead of 2, highlight different sections. Whatever floats your boat! Below an example of formatting your final talk.

*Hint: Make sure to “do the math” if you reformat font size or spacing so that your reading pace remains the same.*

## NOW WHAT?

But I’m asking myself NOW WHAT?! I’m done with vacuuming and cleaning, what do I do with myself now?! NOW WHAT?!

Today we are finishing out our series on what it means to have NOT JUST New Year’s RESOLUTIONS but what it might look like to have a NEW YEAR’S REVOLUTION, I think it’s fair that we ask ourselves NOW WHAT?! We’ve talked about forgiveness, overcoming our fears, we’ve discussed how the question is NOT is this God’s will for my life but “Is This Wise?”

### Action Step - SUBMIT Your Story

Now that you’ve written your story, it’s time to submit it!

Go to [www.elementstudentministry.com/story](http://www.elementstudentministry.com/story) to upload your story.

**SECTION II - DELIVERING YOUR STORY**

**Step 6 - Practice Beforehand**

1. Just because it's your story, doesn't mean you're Shakespeare.
2. How many times you ask? Seven is the magic number - the magic number for really *knowing* your talk. "Reading over it" is exactly what it sounds like. It's you, without distracting, **READING** over your story aloud, practicing specific lines that you really want to emphasize and overall knowing the structure of your talk.
3. Make sure to spread out when you read it. "Science" proves that as you work to fully know information/memorize something, your brain retains that information as you sleep.
4. That brings us to point #4...**GET A GOOD NIGHT'S REST BEFORE YOU SPEAK!**
5. Present your story **AT LEAST TWICE** to your speaking coach and **AT LEAST** once to a friend or family member.

Practice Times	Date	Comments/Thoughts
1st Time with Speaking Coach		
2nd Time with Speaking Coach		
1st Time with Family/Friends		
2nd Time with Family/Friends		

**As You Deliver Your Story...**

1. Breathe. Breathe often. Mostly because you need air to breathe in general but also because as you breathe you'll be able to better keep your pace.
2. Take your time. This is your story, so own it.
3. Believe in yourself and know that your talk and your story is one worth telling.