

Explore the Bible Series for April 8: Small stories make a big impact

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Small stories make a big impact

- Luke 24:1-6, 36-49

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Six years ago, I was healed of epilepsy. To understand the magnitude of my healing, though, you have to understand the extremity of my condition. So let me tell you my story.

My story

I had been having seizures for 15 years before anyone knew it. Since I didn't convulse while in seizure, I was never diagnosed, and each year the condition grew worse. By the time I was finally diagnosed, my brain was in constant seizure, and I was near death.

The medications were supposed to save my life, but six years ago, after 10 years of mega-doses of medications, my body was shutting down. One

medication had affected my liver, and the one I was on at the time was affecting my lungs. Each day, I grew weaker, and though none of us would say it, we each were preparing for the inevitable. It seemed unlikely I would survive the year. The doctor had said my brain would never heal, that I'd be on medications the rest of my life. But it was becoming apparent that I wouldn't survive much more of the medications.

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One spring morning, I turned my face to God, not really asking. Complaining would be more like it. I told him my concerns for my children if I died, and then I left the situation in his hands. Meanwhile, my reaction to the medications grew worse. By summer, I could barely breathe and had to bow out of Vacation Bible School.

That summer, the youth choir was going to Mexico on a mission trip. A week before departure, one of the sponsors was hospitalized, and the others asked me to take her place. Ignoring my protests, they told me to pray about it. That evening during worship, God spoke to me. He said: "Go. You go, and see what I will do."

So I went. The long and short of it is, I had no trouble on the trip, and by the end of the summer, I was completely off the medications. I had been healed. What should have been my final year of life became a new beginning.

Easter is the season of new beginnings. It's a celebration of new life. We

must be careful, though, to carry that life into the rest of the year. Life isn't life if it doesn't keep on breathing.

The importance of a living story

Our lesson this week reminds us of Jesus' last words, a command to go and tell others about what he's done. If you really think about it, there's no better way to keep the message alive. By telling others about Jesus, we share the life he's given us.

My story is a perfect example. God gave me life through my healing, but my story sparked a revival among family and friends. People saw my weakness turn to strength. They saw my clouded brain clear up and my activity level increase. I was able to return to old hobbies and work, long laid aside. My life became evidence that God is intimately concerned with our well-being. My story inspired the realization that God isn't just a someday promise. He is in the here-and-now, aching to pour out his blessings if we will only let him.

Unfortunately, many of us cringe at the prospect of sharing our faith with others. "What would I say?" we ask ourselves. "What if they ask me something I don't know?" So we have to ask the logical questions. Do we really have anything to tell? And if we don't, is our relationship real?

The command to go and tell assumes intimate knowledge. After all, how can we tell others about something we don't know intimately? Only when we really know a subject is our communication infused with life.

Furthermore, when we go and tell, we tend to employ formulas and programs we learned at church. This isn't very personal. The truth is, people aren't searching for a vague, someday God, and when we use impersonal formulas to tell about God, we are offering little more.

When Jesus tells us to share, he doesn't want us to use formulas to share Bible stories. He wants us to share the things he's done in our lives, our personal stories. People want to know Jesus is alive, and he isn't verifiably alive unless he's impacting our lives today. People want to know Jesus cares, so they need to see evidence he intervenes in our lives now. Salvation isn't, nor can it be, a someday event. It's got to be for today, or sadly, it isn't worth our time. We've got to tell the story about a living God who can breathe life into our here-and-now. We're telling people about a living God. We need to tell living stories.

Finding your story

Where do we get our stories? Think about the stories you tell your family and friends. Stories grow out of intimate relationships. They come from interaction. I can't tell a story about how you impacted my life until I've actually interacted with you. It's the same with God.

We aren't going to see God move in our lives if we'll only spare him a few hours each Sunday. Relationship demands give and take, time and intimacy. That's why Paul tells us to pray without ceasing. Prayer is simply talking to God and enjoying his presence. Too often we think of prayer as an activity, but if we'll realize it's little more than sitting in the presence of God, we'll grasp the concept of unending prayer. Prayer is not a list of requests, but a time of listening and sharing with God. In other words, prayer is relationship. As we develop our ability to let God spend time with us throughout each day, we'll begin to see evidence in our own lives. We'll find our stories.

My story is a big one, but not all stories are so big. Sometimes the smallest stories make the biggest impact. We must never judge the stories God gives us, because the story is always appropriate for the need. God has a unique

message for each of us to share. Some are grand while others seem small, but when the stories come together, they paint a beautiful picture of a living, breathing, every-day God who cares enough to invest in our lives.

Our calling is to go and tell, but we've got to have a story before we can tell it. As we celebrate the victory of life over death at Easter, we need to search our lives for the stories God has given us. Then it's a simple matter of being ready. Going and telling isn't supposed to be work. It's a spontaneous occurrence when we're excited about the things God is doing in our lives.

Discussion questions

- How do you usually feel when the subject of witnessing comes up? How does that compare with the idea of telling a story?
- Do you have stories of things God has done in your life? How recent are they?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate the intimacy of your relationship with God? What is your greatest hindrance to intimacy?

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