



Investing refers to the biblical call on every Christ follower to build a friendship with someone who is not yet a believer in Jesus, with the hope of having an opportunity to share their faith story and God's story with that person. This is not about a packaged technique, but rather about "doing life" with those who are not yet Christians and talking to them in a meaningful way about Jesus and the need that they have to be in relationship with him. This brochure outlines some helpful hints in terms of sharing *my story* and *God's story*.

My Story

Here are a few simple questions to help you think through your personal faith story. This list is not exhaustive, but it should give you a clearer picture of how God has influenced your life. It is our desire to see all of us use our stories to better relate the message of Jesus to the people around us. You may want to jot down your thoughts to help with clarity and brevity.

- What was your childhood like? Were you a churchgoer? Was a life in Jesus something that you pursued? If not, did you believe in anything remotely spiritual?
- When is the first time that you remember hearing about God, Jesus, or the Christian faith? How old were you? What were the circumstances?
- What was your immediate response to the good news of forgiveness through Christ alone?
- If you grew up hearing about Jesus, is there a time that you can remember it really clicking? Can you explain this turn of events?
- If you resisted your first hearing of the gospel message, what was the main reason why you did not believe at first? What ultimately changed your heart toward the gospel message?
- Are there any life occurrences—a death in the family, illness, a miracle, a new relationship, etc.—that stand out as landmarks to you on your journey of faith? How did God use these landmarks to pull you into a relationship with him?

- What attracted you to know more about Jesus? What part of your relationship with him has influenced you the most?
- What aspects of your life changed after you made your decision to be a Christ follower?

Use this as a starting point. If you answered these questions thoroughly, you no doubt have a story to begin sharing with others. But do not stop here. It is important to keep coming back to your story and updating it as God continues to influence your life.

Adapted from *The Coffeehouse Gospel: Sharing Your Faith in Everyday Conversation* by Matthew Paul Turner

OBC Library Books

- *Becoming a Contagious Christian* by Bill Hybels & Mark Mittelberg
- *More Ready Than You Realize* by Brian McLaren
- *Lifestyle Evangelism* by Joe Aldrich

God's Story

1. The first sentence of the Bible is the bold declaration, "In the beginning God created." The Bible and the story of the Christian worldview begin with God and creation. God created the universe, our world, plants, animals, and mankind. He also created the physical laws of nature and moral laws to make everything work in harmony, and he gave humans the capacity for meaningful work and the ability for rational and moral thought like himself. Because we belong to God, he has the authority to expect us to fulfill certain responsibilities on earth and to determine how we ought to relate to him and each other.
2. Of course, God pre-existed creation. He is the perfect, eternal, loving, and sovereign ruler over everything. The opening scenes of the Bible show Adam and Eve enjoying intimacy with God and each other, and God giving mankind responsibility for caring for his creation. God was in his glory, and he declared all of it good. The kingdom of God was alive and well on planet earth.
3. But something went terribly wrong. Satan, an angel who rebelled against God prior to creation, tempted Adam and Eve to disobey God. And ever since "the fall," every person ever born (except Jesus) has been born with a sin nature, predisposed to distrust God and others and constantly trying to live independent of both. Some of the consequences of sin are death, broken relationships, selfish behaviour, fear, lack of purpose, and most importantly a broken relationship with God. But this corruption is not limited to mankind and society. Animals, plants, and the earth itself are affected.
4. Satan himself has a kingdom and is the champion of disobedience, tempting and deceiving mankind to continually ignore God. The kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world are sworn enemies. One is committed to loving God and caring for other people and God's world. The other is committed to self-fulfillment, autonomy from their creator, and has other gods and allegiances. But other religions, philosophies, or non-

Christians are not the enemy. The enemy is Satan and the self-deceptive power of sin.

5. But all was not lost. Right in the Garden of Eden, God initiated his plan to redeem or rescue his world. Central to that plan was the sending of a Messiah, or Saviour. God's redemption plan did not lay dormant until Jesus came, nor was God content to simply redeem mankind spiritually. God's passion was that his original intentions for mankind and his world be restored—love, justice, and shalom would again be the norm, albeit imperfectly until Jesus returns again. Shalom is the wholeness or deep contentment achieved when all things are working in harmony as God intended. God's expectation is that every person who claims to love him be his agents or ambassadors, working to reverse some of the effects of the fall.

6. Therefore, right in Genesis, God made a covenant or promise with Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel (Jewish people). If Abraham trusted God alone, God would lead him to a new land, make his descendants a great nation, and all the nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham.

7. Six hundred years later, after God led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt under the leadership of Moses, God created the first theocracy—Israel, a nation led by God. Speaking through Moses, God wrote their laws and told them where they were to go and how they were to live. He was their literal king. God also made a new covenant with Israel. If Israel would serve him alone and live according to the ceremonial and moral laws he gave them, he would give them the land he promised Abraham and make them a showcase of prosperity, peace, and blessing. Other nations would see the greatness of God, and they too would choose to love and honour him, thereby expanding God's kingdom on earth.

8. Unfortunately, Israel did not live up to their end of the bargain for long. Their problems began when they rejected God as their king and asked for a human king like other countries. Whenever those kings and Israel obeyed God, they prospered. As soon as they prospered, they began worshiping other gods, disobeying God's moral laws, disregarding the poor, and embarrassing God. When God punished them, they would repent and start living like his people again, only to repeat the cycle over and over.

9. But the prophets God sent to Israel never gave up the dream and the promise of the kingdom of God on earth, where God's will would be done as it is in heaven and where the earth would again experience the peace and prosperity of God. Isaiah and the other prophets looked forward to the coming of the Messiah and the ushering in of a new era with a new covenant or testament.

10. Jesus, the Son of God, was (and is) the promised Messiah. He came to earth as our rescuer and messenger from God to explain what this new covenant from God was and to personally fulfill it. It was a promise of peace with God based not on our obedience to the sacrificial or ceremonial laws given to Moses, but on Christ's sacrifice alone. God made it possible that by Christ's death and resurrection, any person who truly has faith that Jesus is the Son of God, believes his teachings, and repents or turns away from his or her old sinful habits will be forgiven of all their sins—spiritual redemption. This free gift of God through Jesus Christ is called grace. Like the waiting father in the parable of the prodigal son, God welcomes us back with open arms from our rebellious journey! The Bible tells us that heaven has a party whenever this happens.

11. But it is about more than forgiveness. We are born again by the Holy Spirit of God, given brand new spiritual DNA, and actually become the spiritual children of God. The Holy Spirit's primary ministries are to remind us of the things Jesus taught and to empower us and the church (all believers everywhere) with spiritual gifts which enable

us to serve more effectively. The Holy Spirit also causes believers to exhibit what the Bible calls the fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control).

12. But the other reason Jesus came to earth was to call all who would follow him to join a new community of world changers. "May your kingdom come, may your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." The gospel or good news declared by Jesus was as much about a radical call to social and economic justice, mercy, and love as it was about salvation and heaven. He made it clear that every believer has been given a "sub-kingdom" or responsibilities while on earth to be part of the redemptive purposes of God. We were not saved just so we could go to heaven someday. Salvation's purpose was and still is to create a group of people sold out to God, doing the will of God, for the glory and pleasure of God—in this life and the next.

13. The early church took this seriously. We read in the opening chapters of the Book of Acts that immediately upon responding to the gospel, people began to love God with wholehearted devotion and took to heart Jesus' command to love others as much as they loved themselves. The early church was so radical in their love and lifestyle that within a century millions of people became followers of Jesus. The kingdom of God spread like wild fire. They did not set out to change the culture around them. They simply followed Jesus' commands, and the people and culture around them changed in response. Christ through his followers was again redeeming or taking back that which had been lost in the fall of man.

14. Unfortunately, within a few more centuries, this devotion to living out the teachings of Jesus degenerated into religious form and inexcusable behaviour by the church. Still, God preserved a remnant of men and women who loved Jesus more than anything on earth. Today, regardless of the hypocrisy and outright sin in many who call themselves Christians, Jesus' teachings are still true. The Bible is God's message to mankind and as such is the ultimate authority for all followers of Jesus.

15. Our mission in life is to love God by loving and unselfishly serving the people he has placed in our lives. In fact, love is the litmus test of our faith. Jesus is our teacher and the example for our message, motives, and methods, and he expects his followers to do just that—follow his example. Those who do are his true followers. Those who don't, aren't—regardless of what they say they believe about Jesus or the Bible.

16. Followers of Jesus look forward with great hope and expectation to the day when he will come again for his followers and usher in the final stage of the kingdom. All that is wrong with this present earth will be destroyed. When he does return, all who did not follow Jesus in this life will be separated from God and God's people forever. Those who truly believed and followed Jesus will live with him in a new heaven and new earth forever. The redemption of the world will then be complete, and shalom will rest on everything forever.

Adapted from www.meta-concepts.org/introduction/grandstory.asp

Internet Resources

- www.ibs.org/bibles/about/4.php
- www.believersweb.org/view.cfm?ID=815