

GOD'S STORY AND YOURS

God's story goes like this...

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. He made people in his image to reign over his world by his word. The first man and woman rebelled against God, and all humanity followed.

Claiming to be wise, we became fools and traded the truth of God for the lie that we could live and reign without him. But God, who is rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loves us, sent his Son to pay for our sins. He has made us alive together with Christ and is reconciling to himself all things in heaven and earth by making peace through the blood of his cross. We now wait for the day when all things will be made new and we will worship Jesus in a garden city, seeing him face-to-face and singing with all the saints, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain." This is God's story, and he's weaving each of our stories together with his for the glory of Jesus.

Telling your story is a powerful way to share the good news of Jesus with others. And what better time to do that than Easter?

THE HERO OF THE STORY

You can tell a lot about people by how they tell their stories. Who is the hero? What obstacle do they overcome? What power does the hero use to win? Many of us tell stories with ourselves as the hero, or share testimonies of how this book or that teacher changed our lives...and can change yours too! This isn't surprising. We were made to worship God. We love telling stories about ourselves. Tragically, sin has us boasting about lesser things, and the stories of our world reflect that. As followers of Jesus, our stories put Jesus front and center. We say yes and amen to *Ephesians 2*—we were enemies of God, but God loved us and saved us by his grace in Jesus Christ. Telling people about Jesus will make your story even better. He is the hero.

PREPARING YOUR EASTER STORY

As we learn to tell our story, we can ask God to lead us, and look to his story for guidance. A basic outline goes like this: Before Christ, The "But God" moment, and your life after meeting Jesus. During this season of Easter we even will ask you to tell a forth part—why Easter is important to you.

Before Christ

Our stories begin with where we came from and where God was in our upbringing. "Growing up..." • What did you think about Jesus? Eventually, we began living (or at least become aware of) our own version of life without God. This may be a series of habits or decisions that are demonstrably sinful. Some of our stories will highlight a tragic event or personal crisis that made us aware of our need for a savior. "My life was..." • What event, decisions, or habits marked or exemplified this 'fall'?

"Jesus moment"

Our stories take a turn when Jesus enters in. “Then I heard the good news...” • What was it about Jesus that drew you to trust in him? Make it clear that Jesus is the hero. You could say something like, “I believed that Christ died from my sins and rose from the grave” or “all of a sudden, I couldn’t deny God’s grace in sending his son for me.” Another option is to quote a bible passage that makes the good news very clear, such as *John 3:16*, *Romans 5:8*, or *1 John 4:10*.

After Meeting Jesus

The Bible ends with Jesus on the throne, reigning over a new creation. However, our stories are not finished yet. We live in a real world, but with real hope. How has new life in Jesus changed the way you think about yourself? What future are you longing or hoping for? If you feel stuck, try using the two archetypes from the parable of the prodigal son. Were you more reckless or a religious rule-follower? Whatever you *were*, you are not that any more. Talk about the way Jesus saved you from that and how he’s showing you a new way of life. You could also try contrasting your core identity (how you view yourself) before and after Christ.

The Importance of Easter

We want people to know why you think Easter is important. It could be a quick memory that ties to an invitation to join Easter services. It could be what you love about Easter. Whatever it is bring it to an invitation.

A SAMPLE STORY

Before Christ

Growing up, I was always in church. I mean...I was not really a bad kid at all. But I often found myself living a double life. I would be one way to a group a people and a church kid to another set of people.

Jesus Moment

I found myself as a teenager being more and more intrigued by knowing who Jesus was. Even though I wanted to live a double life, I grew more and more intrigued by knowing Jesus and how Good he is. I realized that he has a plan for my life and I wanted to follow Him. I gave my life to Jesus. He has forgiven me of my sin and he can forgive you too.

After Christ

I could tell you that life is easy and that there’s no problems, but that is not promised to us. But I can tell you that I have found out what peace and hope really mean because I know Jesus. Jesus loves me and I am so happy I follow Him.

Easter Everywhere

When I think about Easter, I remember those egg hunts we had as a kid. We’d get crazy hunting eggs. But as I’ve gotten older I can think of the special times I’ve had worshipping the Risen Jesus. Easter is an important to time to remember what God has done for us. I’d love for you to join me for Easter

services. You can learn more about them at EasterEverywhere.com. I'll be watching my church at 9:30 a.m. on April 12. I'd love for you to join me.