

“TELL ME THE STORY....”

10 / 29 / 17

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Acts 22: 1-16 (NIV) (Was: SERM_307, 10/20/96; 768, 10 / 26 / 03; 1069, 11 / 4 / 07; 2073, 10 / 29 / 17)

INTRODUCTION — **I LOVE STORIES!!** I love to hear them, and to TELL them...

Maybe you have heard about the SINGER, ACTOR, GAME SHOW HOST JOHN DAVIDSON:

WHEN he was learning to drive, his father — a BAPTIST MINISTER— told him he could HAVE A CAR if he would do THREE THINGS:

- 1) GET AT LEAST STRAIGHT “B’s” on his REPORT CARD;**
- 2) READ the BIBLE DAILY; and —**
- 3) GET a HAIRCUT!!**

“On my next report card, I got all ‘B’s,” said DAVIDSON, “and I told DAD that I had been reading the BIBLE much more than ever before. He said, ‘**THAT’S FINE, JOHN, BUT WHAT ABOUT THE HAIRCUT?**’ **I told him that the BIBLE I read had PICTURES of JESUS with LONG HAIR.** To which my father replied, ‘**YES, BUT REMEMBER THAT JESUS ALSO WALKED MOST EVERYWHERE.**’ ”

LIFE is a STORY. And your **CHRISTIAN LIFE** is a STORY— one you are writing every day. I WONDER— have you ever tried to tell YOUR STORY to anyone??

I. PAUL LOVED TO TELL HIS STORY....

A. WE SEE IT THREE TIMES in ACTS — about being a PERSECUTOR of CHRISTIANS, and then meeting JESUS on the road to DAMASCUS. He liked to TELL OF HOW JESUS MET HIM, CALLED HIM, and CHANGED HIS LIFE.

B. HE WAS DETERMINED to TELL the WORLD about J.C., the Savior , and tell anyone who would listen WHAT JESUS HAD DONE FOR HIM !!

II. WHAT ABOUT YOU????

A. Have YOU ever told anyone what JESUS means to you? How Jesus saved you??

WHY YOU BECAME A CHRISTIAN ???

WHY YOU DECIDED to REALLY FOLLOW JESUS ??

WHEN WE HEAR THIS KIND OF TALK, WE WONDER:

B. WHAT DO WE SAY??!? Do we prepare a SLICK PRESENTATION ??

1. The “FOUR SPIRITUAL LAWS”????

2. The “ROAD THROUGH ROMANS”????

3. OR: some other BOOKLET or TRACT????

C. DO WE HAVE TO GO THROUGH TRAINING ?????!!

1. NOW, TRAINING can be good. In the PAST, I have taught a **FOUR-WEEK COURSE** on WHAT WE BELIEVE and FAITH-SHARING.

2. YES, a BIBLE STUDY and a little HELP in learning how to SHARE THE GOSPEL MESSAGE that “JESUS SAVES!!” is a good thing. LEARNING HOW TO TALK TO PEOPLE ABOUT HOW TO REPENT OF THEIR SINS and INVITE JESUS CHRIST INTO THEIR LIVES is good for ALL CHRISTIANS to learn.

3. BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU SHOULD LEARN IS:

III. HOW YOU CAN TELL YOUR OWN STORY....

Follow the example of the apostle PAUL:

A. Paul Shares His Testimony

1. Details of his life before conversion (22:3-5)

(where I was born): “City of TARSUS” (in Turkey);

(what religious background): “JEWISH... trained in the LAW”

(what was I like): “PERSECUTED FOLLOWERS of the WAY” of J.C.

2. Details of his conversion (22:6-16)

“I heard a voice... ‘WHO ARE YOU, LORD?’ ‘I AM JESUS, WHOM YOU ARE PERSECUTING...’ I was baptized in JESUS’ NAME.”

B. Telling YOUR Story — Preparing Your Testimony

1. Before I found faith in Christ, I lived and thought this way:
2. How I found faith in Christ: (be specific, if possible)
3. After I found faith in Christ, these changes took place:
4. My life in Christ today includes these attitudes and activities:
5. You might find a pertinent Bible verse or thought to end with:
6. **AS AN EXAMPLE, LET me TELL the STORY I KNOW BEST:**

C. Telling MY Story:

1. **Before I found faith in Christ**, I lived and thought this way: As I have told many of you, I was raised a Methodist— born in METHODIST HOSPITAL in Peoria, Illinois; baptized as a ONE YEAR-OLD at FIRST METHODIST CHURCH in Peoria; earned a **PERFECT ATTENDANCE PIN** for FIRST GRADE in **SUNDAY SCHOOL**. I went to High School at the **BEST HIGH SCHOOL** in town— even the NAME dripped with pride: **RICHWOODS!!** I graduated in the **TOP 12%**, **and went to college with the idea of becoming an INVESTIGATOR for the F.B.I., or else a LAWYER— a PROSECUTOR!**

WHILE in my FIRST and SECOND YEAR OF COLLEGE, I had to sort through what kind of person I was, and what sort of person I was GOING to be!!

I recognized that I had a lot of PERSONAL INSECURITIES, which often led me to be ARGUMENTATIVE with others, and PUSHED ME to EXCEL and “PROVE” MYSELF BETTER THAN OTHERS! I tried to “FIT IN” by going to parties, trying to make it with girls, drink beer, etc. **BUT THE MORE THINGS I TRIED TO DO TO BE ACCEPTED AND “FIT IN”, the more HOLLOW and QUESTIONING I became: “How can I find PEACE with my INTERNAL CONFLICTS??”** I wondered. **“CAN I EVER REALLY BE**

ACCEPTED BY EVERY ONE ELSE?? OR WILL IT BE A LIFELONG, NEVER-ENDING QUEST TO PROVE MYSELF WORTHY TO OTHERS??"

2. How I found faith in Christ:

In my FIRST YEAR of college, I got to know some other guys who were DIFFERENT FROM ME— they studied the BIBLE, talked about KNOWING JESUS CHRIST PERSONALLY, and didn't seem to STRUGGLE as much as I did with PERSONAL INSECURITIES and DOING THINGS TO BE ACCEPTED BY OTHERS. WHEN I TALKED to THEM ABOUT THEIR FAITH in GOD, I found out that I “BELIEVED” (in my head) the same things they did about GOD, about JESUS BEING THE SAVIOR, and that we need to “LIVE A GOOD LIFE.” BUT I LACKED ONE THING— THERE WAS SOMETHING *MISSING* in me— MY ‘FAITH’ was only INTELLECTUAL, ‘IN MY HEAD,’ but *THEIR FAITH* WAS ALIVE, PERSONAL— THEY WERE CONFIDENT that GOD HEARD THEM WHEN THEY PRAYED!! THEY TALKED of FOLLOWING JESUS *AS IF HE WERE RIGHT THERE WITH THEM!!!!*

IN the FALL of my SOPHOMORE YEAR, I decided that I had to make an ADULT DECISION— I COULD NO LONGER LIVE JUST on the FAITH of MY PARENTS! I NEEDED TO MAKE MY OWN, PERSONAL DECISION to FOLLOW JESUS CHRIST IN MY LIFE— or *STOP PRETENDING TO BE A CHRISTIAN!* For, I felt, IF I WASN'T GOING to FOLLOW CHRIST WITH ALL of MY LIFE, in EVERY AREA OF LIFE, WITH ALL MY HEART— I was just *FAKING IT* as a CHRISTIAN— JUST a PRETENDER, not a REAL CHRISTIAN!

SO I KNELT by my BED one evening in OCTOBER, 1974, and I PRAYED as HONESTLY as I COULD: “LORD JESUS, I’M NOT SURE THAT YOU EXIST— I HAVE MY DOUBTS. BUT IF YOU DO, ENTER INTO MY LIFE. FORGIVE ME OF MY SINS, and CLEANSE ME, HEART and SOUL. SIT at the CENTER of MY LIFE, to GUIDE ME, and DIRECT ME in HOW to SPEND MY LIFE.”

UNLIKE the APOSTLE PAUL, I did not have a DRAMATIC EXPERIENCE—

NO HEAVENLY VOICES, NO FLASHES of LIGHTNING, NO “SCALES FALLING FROM MY EYES!!” BUT, SOMEHOW, I HAD the SENSE THAT I WAS NO LONGER ALONE.

3. After I found faith in Christ, these changes took place:

I learned early on that **the Christian life is a JOURNEY, a PROCESS—** it doesn't happen OVERNIGHT that a NEW CHRISTIAN knows how to follow CHRIST, how to HAVE a QUIET TIME or DEVOTIONAL TIME; how to FORGIVE those who have OFFENDED or WRONGED us; how to AVOID SIN & BUILD our LIVES on the TEACHINGS of JESUS!!

4. My life in Christ today includes these attitudes and activities:

Although I FIRST thought God wanted me to be a LAWYER and PROSECUTOR, I later REALIZED that God wanted me in FULL-TIME CHRISTIAN MINISTRY. I went to PASADENA, CA, to prepare for that, and felt the call to the ORDAINED PREACHING MINISTRY from there—
Just over 28 years ago!!!

5. A pertinent Bible verse and thought to end with:

ONE OF MY FAVORITE BIBLE PASSAGES is **Philippians 3:7-9-->>**

(read from the BIBLE)

IT REMINDS ME OF A SIMPLE QUOTE:

**“ALL THIS LIFE WILL SOON BE PASSED;
ONLY WHAT'S DONE FOR CHRIST WILL LAST.”**

CONCLUSION — HOW ABOUT YOU??

DO YOU HAVE A STORY ABOUT HOW JESUS CHRIST

MADE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR LIFE??

OF WHY YOU WANTED TO FOLLOW CHRIST AND LIVE A

CHRISTIAN LIFE???

I THINK YOU DO!!!!

SO get ready to SHARE that story!!

LAST HYMN: #156— “I LOVE TO TELL THE STORY”