

# How to Write Your Personal Faith Story

By Mary Knox and Ryan Stahl

1. **The goal with your story is multi-faceted:** to connect, to sow gospel seed, to build a bridge for further conversation.
2. **Share your own personal faith story.** You don't need to share the gospel. We have a link to a gospel presentation for you to include at the end of your story. Sharing the gospel will make your writing too long.
3. **Who is your audience?** Who do you want to aim at? Who will you hand your story out to the most? *"For example, drugs were a big part of my early testimony. However, I will currently hand my story to women, my age or younger: married women, younger women: probably NOT drug users. Therefore, I tailored my story to follow a 'love' angle."*—Mary
4. **Put much prayer into it.** What does God want your focus to be? What angle do you want to take?

*"The first thing for me was to spend some considerable time praying and meditating on what the Lord would have me share. With your story, you may have several different angles that you could focus on; with me I chose to focus on my dependence on what other people thought. My identity was in the views of others and not in Christ."*  
—Ryan

5. **Outline your story.** There is a beginning, middle, and conclusion: Life Before You Came to Christ, How You Came to Christ, and Life After Coming to Christ.
  - **Life Before You Came to Christ.**
    - We all struggle with the same stuff. What are your common struggles? Ex: feelings of failure, fear, unloved, insecurity, loneliness, shame, desires to be popular, successful, wealthy, comfortable.
  - **How You Came to Christ.**
    - How did this happen? What is the drama? Ex. You went from searching for meaning, to having a meaning-filled life. You went from loneliness to fulfilling relationships. Was there a key person? A key event?
  - **Life After Coming to Christ.**
    - Mention specific changes. In my story....(put in your story)
6. **Guidelines for writing your story**
  - a. **Don't Preach.** This is your personal story, not your personal sermon.
  - b. **Be brief, focused, clear, coherent, and true.** Stick with one theme: cohesive, punch, simple, easy to follow.
  - c. **Avoid clutter.**
  - d. **Create interest.** Use humor, word pictures.
  - e. **Avoid Christian lingo.** Bill Hybels wrote a book called, **JUST WALK ACROSS THE ROOM.** It's excellent. Read it. He has four criticisms of people sharing their story: long-windedness, fuzziness, religionese, and superiority. Religionese is a big no-no. Words like 'salvation, born again, accepting Jesus, and personal Lord and Savior mean very little to non-Christ-followers...Our stories sound like they are being told in code/ God-talk-religionese....High praise from an unbeliever sounds like this: *"I understood every word you just said."* Seek for that kind of effect.
  - f. **Aim for 600-700 words.** 800+ is too many.

7. **Create a punchy title:** something that will grab the reader's attention, that will make them WANT to read your story, and not throw it away. Ex: "FILLING THE EMPTINESS"
8. **Break up the content with 'headlines' for each part:** again, something snappy. Ex. The World Made Fun of Me; The World Left Me Empty; God Accepted Me.
9. **Use a photo, drawing, cartoon:** anything that represents you.
10. **At the end:** Offer people your contact information to contact you if they want to talk or want more information. Give them your cell, email, Facebook. Include a link for your church. Include the link for the gospel presentation.
11. **Review and rewrite.** Walk away from it. Give it a rest. Read it again. Edit it.

*"I just started typing and tried to get my thoughts out. After I did this over a couple days, I let it sit for a while. I then came back to it and read through it again and made some more edits. I tried to cut any extra info that didn't help convey the message. My goal of my testimony tract was to have a clear, concise, direct, super concentrated story. I tried to keep the text to 600 words or less."--Ryan*

Give it to a few people to critique. Rewrite with your edits/ and friends' suggestions. Give it a rest. Reread it. Are you happy with it? Make any changes that you want or your friends suggest. It is now ready for printing. We suggest you print a small number of copies, so if you want to change it later, you can.

*"I attached my draft to an email and sent it to a bunch of my friends. You really want their open and honest feedback and most importantly, you need to be able to accept their criticism and suggestions. Don't take their comments personally. Remember, they are trying to help you!"*

*Here is what I wrote to them:*

*Hello friends,*

*I have had it on my heart for a while to produce my own personal testimony tract. Now as part of preparing for the Unite Conference - Just Sow It, I am finalizing the wording of my tract. The goal is to share my story; this tract would be something I would hand to people I interact with, not to outright share the Gospel. This is not something I will be mass-distributing, but a tool to hand out to people I meet. I may work on several tracts formats in the future that would include a full Gospel presentation.*

*So since you are my friends, I would very much like your input. Could you read this over and tell me what you think? Please be open and honest about what wording works/what doesn't. Think about this from an unsaved friend perspective - would this pique their interest? Or is my wording really boring?*

*Could you take a few minutes to read and give me your honest (even brutal) feedback? I want my testimony tract to be as powerful as possible.*

*After I edit and update based on your suggestions, I will put it into a booklet tract format.*

*Thank you for your time!"*

*--Ryan*