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# **DAY 1: Your Story is the Truth**

Imagine if you were in the crowd when Paul shared his story or when one of his letters was being read to you by a church elder. Paul’s open about imprisoning and murdering innocent men and women — maybe people his audience had heard of or known ([Acts 22:3-5](http://biblegateway.com/bible?version=ESV&passage=Acts+22:3-5)).

**Key Verse:**

2 Timothy 1:8: So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.

**Key Celebration:**

Sharing your story is about trusting God.

**Key Challenge:**

Are you ready to be emotionally honest about all the work God has done, without embarrassment or shame?

Paul is truthful about feeling overwhelmed, full of despair, and scared of death during his missionary journey in Asia ([2 Corinthians 1:8](http://biblegateway.com/bible?version=ESV&passage=2%20Corinthians+1:8)). He’s honest about feeling drawn to sin, even when he knows it’s wrong ([Romans 7:23-24](http://biblegateway.com/bible?version=ESV&passage=Romans+7:23-24)). He’s vulnerable about his continuing struggle with his thorn in the flesh ([2 Corinthians 12:9](http://biblegateway.com/bible?version=ESV&passage=2%20Corinthians+12:9)). He’s candid about his struggles with fear and shortcomings as a speaker ([1 Corinthians 2:3-4](http://biblegateway.com/bible?version=ESV&passage=1%20Corinthians+2:3-4)).

The apostle Paul is not the only saint to witness to the power of God in Scripture, but it’s no exaggeration to say his writing defines the idea of Christian faith story. Sharing his story appears to be Paul’s default method for sharing about Jesus, especially to potentially hostile unbelievers.

On the way to Rome, Paul has the opportunity to stand before six different crowds, and he chooses to present his story each time. He doesn’t make an argument or preach a sermon. Instead, he lets the inarguable truth of his personal experiences make the case for Jesus as the Messiah.

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***If your story isn’t true — if it doesn’t include messy details, messy emotions, and messy faith — it’s just a story.***

Paul’s radical transparency is both disarming and compelling. Paul’s example in Scripture is rich, but perhaps its most powerful overarching message is that truth triumphs. Paul insists on telling the truth about God and telling the truth about himself.

If you’re just starting to think about sharing your story, that’s the best place to start.

If your story isn’t true — if it doesn’t include messy details, messy emotions, and messy faith — it’s just a story. The danger for most Christians is not being fake, but being economical with the truth — just enough to be “real,” but not enough to “cut to the heart.”

Jesus wants us to know ourselves as we really are — created by God, separated by sin, and meant for eternal relationship with Him.

Satan will tempt everyone with pride and the opportunity for image management, but our honesty about our weakness and sin is a powerful part of revealing our desperate need for Jesus.

One of the greatest false beliefs is the risk of vulnerability.

Opening yourself up to full transparency about your story can be a critical step in overcoming the lingering power of shame in your life — and you can be an example to others.

Paul’s way — Jesus’ way — is not to sugarcoat or hide reality. It is to let the light of Christ expose what was hidden in darkness and to illuminate God’s work ([2 Corinthians 4:6](http://biblegateway.com/bible?version=ESV&passage=2%20Corinthians+4:6)).

The billions of people who have followed Jesus as a result of Paul’s missionary work — in person or through his writings — are proof honest faith story works.

***The good news of Jesus is grasped with the heart before it’s grasped with the mind.***

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Perhaps you feel the pressure for your story to be victorious? The apostle Paul didn’t. At one point, he warns his protege, Timothy, not to be ashamed of his imprisonment ([2 Timothy 1:8](http://biblegateway.com/bible?version=ESV&passage=2%20Timothy+1:8) ).

If you’re fully honest, you don’t need to claim physical or spiritual breakthroughs that don’t exist.

Are you tempted to overstate changes in your life? Your freedom? Your healing? Your commitment to Christ?

Telling your story requires faith and contains faith, but it’s not speaking something into existence. Your faith story is the “I-witness” of what has happened or is happening in your life.

You don’t have to wait to share your story until you are where you want to be. You simply tell your story where you really are.

Of course, we will always have practical limits of what we can share, based on the time or space available to us, or of what is most relevant for the audience involved. But when you are selecting what to share, always work to include concrete details or key moments that help people see, feel and truly understand what was or is going on in our hearts, in our minds, and in our lives.

Define your situations. Name your emotions. Describe your struggles. Being specific creates empathy, produces credibility and invites people to enter into your story. Prayer and wisdom will help you decide what is necessary and what is needlessly explicit, sensational or glorifying of sin.

Remember, you’ve achieved the ultimate connection with your listeners when you have caused them to reconsider the manner of their own lives because of the truth. The good news of Jesus is grasped with the heart before it’s grasped with the mind.

### Reflect:

Are there any details in your story you’re uncomfortable including? Why?

### Action Step:

How would you tell your story if you didn’t fear judgment? Open your notes app or your journal and write down the key points of your story as they really are. Add to them at any point through this journey.