

## SHARING YOUR STORY

In this session, you will have the opportunity to tell your 15-minute story. Authentic relationships require closeness, and there is no better way to cultivate closeness than sharing your story. The group experience will rise and fall on the level of transparency and honesty each of you is willing to give. Many times, God does great work when we bare our souls to one another—sharing the good, the bad, and the ugly.

When sharing your story, it is important for others to feel like they understand your faith journey and the real you, rather than just facts or events. It is important to reveal your emotions, feelings, and beliefs in conjunction with event details. Keep these best practices in mind:

- Provide insight into your heart and state of mind, rather than just details about your life.
- Share your faith journey throughout your story.
- Share the significant events in your life that affected your beliefs and development.
- Let others know areas where they can pray for or support you.
- Trust your group with information that you typically protect.

When sharing your story, a typical order of sharing includes family dynamics growing up, adolescent markers, transitioning into the real world, adulthood experiences, and your current life circumstances. Significant markers or events and how those have affected your life should be sprinkled throughout the narrative. Your story should include your life before God, how you encountered God, when you surrendered to God, and how your relationship with God has changed over the years. A good story will express fears and hopes for the future, as well as where your heart and emotions are in relation to your life and faith experiences.

Not all of us are natural storytellers or are eager to tell our story. We might be afraid to tell our story out of order, getting lost while sharing, or forgetting important details by accident. That's why it is crucial to spend time preparing your story. Pray for clarity and courage before you begin.

Write your story out word for word, or prepare notes of major highs and lows. Practice your story out loud several times, and make adjustments so that you stay within your 15 minutes. Remember this isn't an exhaustive account of all your faith and life experiences. If you feel like you are missing significant

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parts of your story, you can share them during your one-on-ones or let it come out naturally during group discussions.

