

***Hope Community Group Stories Curriculum (Year 2)***  
***Telling and Listening to Stories (CG Stories Stand-Alone Handout)***

**How Do We Tell Our Own Personal Story?**

Some Guidelines to Prepare to Share Your Story...

As you think through your story, try to keep this question in mind:

What is God revealing about Himself and His character through my story?

Try to limit your time to 20 or so minutes.

(This will allow space for people to ask you follow up questions and pray for you)

Try to speak honestly about the harm and goodness in your story.

(This often looks like getting specific with sensory details- sight, smell, taste, sound, touch- and avoiding Christian cliches about scenes or people.)

A little preparation goes a long way in making your story clearer and more powerful.

(So, spend some time praying with God about your story, possibly writing it out, and “rehearsing” your story to yourself or someone else. When it comes time to share, feel free to bring some thoughts in a bullet points format, but try to avoid reading word for word if possible. Seeing and being seen by your group members is much of what makes sharing stories powerful)

Try to hit on the following topics:

- What did it feel like to grow up in your home?  
(E.g. Birth order, your role in the family, the unwritten rules in your family)
- If you became a Christian as a child, how did your faith change in college or as an adult?  
(And please tell how you came to Christ.)
- Hit on a couple of events in your life that you feel shaped how you view the world, how you view God, and how you relate to others.
- What are a couple of key relationships in your life and how have they affected you?
- Notice and name a few themes that you see the Lord bringing you back to along your journey.  
(The lies you tend to believe, struggles, gospel truths He brings and you need to remember.)

**How Do We Listen to Another’s Personal Story?**

Some Guidelines to Prepare to Receive Other People’s Stories...(See other side!)

As you listen to someone else's story, you are trying to come alongside someone in safety.

- Try to hear them with your undivided attention: give them the gift of your presence. (We show this to the sharer by putting potential distractions aside, leaning in or sitting relaxed and close enough to hear, and making affirming eye-contact with the listener.)
- Try to hear them with compassion: try to feel what they are feeling, not fix it or ignore it. (Mentally and emotionally put yourself in that situation and in their shoes, and listen for strong emotional words that express pain, shame, longing, vulnerability, or strength).
- Try to hear them with curiosity: allow yourself to want to know more about what happened. (Again, this begins with imagining yourself in their situation, but continues with a desire to know themes and details- who, what, when, where, why- combined with generously giving space and time to the speaker for self-discovery and meeting with Jesus- even in the sharing.)
- To listen well- with presence, compassion, and curiosity, it will help to quietly notice and name to ourselves and God (not to shame) what comes up within us when we're listening to someone else's story: fear, anger, sadness, envy, thankfulness, joy, etc. Then keep breathing.

When you respond to someone else's story, you are trying to communicate that it is safe to feel vulnerable and it is healing to tell (and hear) the truth.

- You can ask follow-up questions that show curiosity and compassion (At an appropriate time, like the end you can ask something such as "would you say more about \_\_\_?" or "what was that experience like for you?" or "what did you say you felt in that situation?" or "how would you describe that relationship today?" )
- You can pray for the person and his or her story at the end. (After some time for questions and comments, you can ask the person if you and/or a few others can pray for them. Feel free to ask the person who shared what they would like prayer for in their story or even in their life right now.)
- You can make affirming comments that show understanding and compassion. (At appropriate times, like during long pauses or at the end you can say something such as "that's so hard" or "ugh" or "I hate that" or "wow, that's so exciting" or "what a gift" or "thanks so much for sharing that. that took so much courage.")
- Saying something more specific or speaking into someone's story is challenging. A few best practices are: (1) describe a situation or response using their own words, (2) speak in a way that is from your heart, and (3) try not to give advice, make the story about you, or paper over difficult situations- for instance, by changing the subject or quoting a Bible lesson.