

A guide for sharing life stories

Planning to share

Identify who will share their story ahead of time. In other words, as a rule, don't ask people to share right on the spot. To tell their story well, people need time to reflect and pray.

If you're the one who has been asked to share next, consider writing your story down to help you reflect and share. You may even need to simply read what you have written when your turn comes. Sharing your story may take up to twenty minutes.

If you have a story you have never told anyone—or told very few people—and you are wrestling with what to share or how to share it in a way that will protect you and edify others, reach out to one (or several) of your leaders and ask if you can process your story with them in private ahead of time. That way, when you share your story, it will be the *second* time you share, and it will also allow you, with the help of your leader(s), to discern what to share or not share and how best to share it.

Preparing to share

As we prepare to tell our stories, it's best to examine and talk about our lives in three ways: 1) we are being sanctified (or being made holy), 2) we suffer, and 3) we sin. It's easy to fall into a "just the facts" format when sharing our life stories, but if we think of our stories as just a list of dates, places, and names, we won't end up sharing the parts of our story that are most meaningful and that help others begin to really know us. Instead, we should think about how we would answer the following questions: How has God used the good, bad, and really difficult things in my life to form me into the person I am today? Who was I before I met Jesus? How has Jesus changed me? Who am I becoming?

Prayerfully responding when we share

After someone has shared, be sure to immediately and vocally thank the person who shared their story and affirm their courage and vulnerability, especially if it was a hard or painful story to share. If it moved you, blessed you, or broke your heart, respond and say those things out loud to that person.

Finally, gather around the person who has shared and pray for them. Have multiple people lay hands on them—asking their permission first, if that is a new experience for them or if they are particularly emotional. If someone has shared something especially vulnerable, make sure multiple people of the same gender move towards them, lay hands on them, and pray vocal and compassionate prayers over them. Invite the Holy Spirit to minister to them in that moment. Pray prayers of encouragement and thanksgiving for their life. Provide tissues if needed.

