

Ev221 Sharing Your Spiritual Journey

Lesson Ev221-24 Methods: Telling the Greatest Story Ever Told

Great preachers are often great storytellers. The most memorable sermons are the ones with a powerful story that illustrates the main point. People remember the story long after the sermon is preached. In this lesson you will learn about the greatest story ever told. You will see how it can be used as a tool to challenge people to commit their lives to Christ. The story tells of God's redemption of his people down through history as portrayed in the Bible. God's story runs from Genesis through Revelation. The witness or evangelist is the storyteller, but what she or he recounts is the sacred story of salvation history. It is a story of sacrifice, covenants, blessings, a journey, and an adversary.

The main function of *sacrifice* in the Scripture is to provide for the sin of humanity. God's judgment for sin under the old covenant was death and the payment for sin was an animal's life. The worshipper performed the most vital part of the sacrifice. He gave an animal, placed his hand on its head, slit its throat, and cut it in pieces. This story of sacrifice gets retold in the New Testament in the death of Christ. You have learned in past lessons that the wages of sin is death and the price that is paid is the shedding of blood. The blood of animals was not enough to pay the debt of a person's sin. Christ, as the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world (Rev 13:8), is the fulfillment of the law's demands. Jesus said he came to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). Only Christ's death could atone for the sins of all humanity.

The greatest story is also one about *covenants*. God continued to try to make his covenant with mankind. God kept his side of the covenant, but man often did not keep his side of the agreements. He made a covenant with Adam, but Adam disobeyed. There followed restatement of the covenant requirements with Abraham, Moses, and David. They sinned too. But now we have the new covenant. We experience a relationship with God because of Christ's sacrifice. As in the old covenants, the Lord himself makes this covenant with his people. "As God has said: "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people" (2Cor. 6:16). This covenant results in a sacred community – a family of faith created by God's covenant of grace with his people.

This great story describes God's *blessings*. The Gospel of John tells us that Jesus did many miracles—turning water into wine, healing the crippled man at the pool, feeding the 5,000, healing the man born blind, and raising the dead. If every one of the things Jesus did had been written down, the whole world would not have room for the books, John said. But he recorded many with a specific purpose: "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31). The story goes well beyond the written word; it is a story that is spoken. It was nearly always carried along by oral tradition long before it was written. It's a story spoken of in our testimonies. It's a story about restoration and redemption. When we are born again, the image of God in us that was marred by sin is now restored through Jesus.

Finally, the story is one about *a journey*—a journey back to God. This is why it is the most wonderful story of all time. It's a story of love, mercy and forgiveness. God gives second

chances. Many people don't realize they can be a part of this story. They are waiting for someone to come and tell them the good news. You can tell them that their sins can be forgiven; they can have eternal life that begins now.

There are two questions that remain: First, what is your story? Is the greatest story one that you are a part of? Ultimately this true story is one of choices. Everyone must choose whom they will serve.

Second, are you telling the greatest story to others? How you tell it is up to you. Whether to tell it or not, is not an option. We, as God's children, are commanded to tell it. Jesus told the demoniac in Mark 5: "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." The woman at the well went and invited others to come see one who had told her everything she had ever done. Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Christ because of the woman's testimony (John 4). The Apostles at the ascension were told to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19-20). They would receive power and would be Christ's witnesses (Acts 1:4).

It's a wonderful story with a marvelous happy ending. Believers have a glorious future to look forward to with God throughout eternity. Here is a story of full restoration—ultimate healing, community, and blessing. Let's not keep it to ourselves, but let others in on the greatest story ever told!

Here are some key principles to remember:

- 1) It is not our story; it is his story at work in us.
- 2) It is a conversation with God—through us— to the world.
- 3) For them to become a part of our story, we must first hear their story.
- 4) Genuine divine conversation then ties their story to the "greatest story ever told."

The last part of the story is that we have an *adversary*. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy" (John 10:10a). But it is also a story of great power "I have come that they may have life, and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10b). Although the devil will attempt to steal our joy, kill the fruit of the Spirit, and destroy our testimony, "The one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world" (1John 4:4). And Paul tells us that "having disarmed the powers and authorities, he [Jesus] made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross" (Col. 2:15). So, while it is a story of tragedy and struggle it is also a story about a mighty Savior.

This lesson is **important** because it describes the major parts of the greatest story ever told, the sacred story of salvation history. This is a story of sacrifice, covenants, blessings, a journey, and an adversary. We want to tell the story so many others can become a part of it too.

The **main truth** of this lesson is contained in two questions. The first is, "What is your story—are you a part of the greatest story?" The second is, "Are you telling the greatest story to others?"

Review Questions

1. What is the greatest story ever told? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you said, “It is the story of God’s redemption of his people down through history,” you are correct.
2. What is the role of the witness or evangelist, according to this lesson? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you answered, “The witness or evangelist is the storyteller, but the story he or she tells is the story of salvation history,” you are correct.
3. What are the two critical questions we need to ask when recounting the greatest story ever told? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you answered, “We first ask, ‘What’s your story—are you a part of this one?’ And second, ‘Are you telling it to others?’” you are right.

Your **assignment** is to listen to this lesson a few times, to understand completely the different aspects of the greatest story ever told. Consider why it’s so important that we first listen to the hearer’s story. We want to know which aspect of the greatest story ever told would best relate to their situation. How might you link the great redemption story to the listener’s circumstances, so that it would encourage them to accept Christ?