Have you ever heard someone tell how God answered his or her prayer for healing? Have you heard others tell about God’s wonderful work in their lives? Maybe someone whose life has been radically changed by the Holy Spirit? These are known as faith stories. Sharing our faith stories is evangelism.

Consider the possibility that every Christian can do evangelism. It would be great to go door-to-door in the area to let people know we invite them to come be with us, but not everyone is gifted with the ability to meet strangers door-to-door. There are many ways to share our faith effectively; we don’t have to be experts in knowing everything about the Christian faith. However, all of our faith sharing should involve preparation.

**FIRST, KNOW WHAT YOU BELIEVE.**
Choose at least one event in your life where it is clear that God supported you, strengthened you, guided you or healed you. In other words, identify a personal faith experience. Others call this a God moment. Always begin in prayer and ask for God’s leading.

In Luke 11:9-10 Jesus said, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”

This implies an ongoing faith in Jesus Christ, trusting that the Holy Spirit will provide us with the right words to say at the right moment so that we can become effective witnesses. If you have a number of faith experiences, you don’t have to tell all of them, just the one that’s right for the listener. Practice telling some of your stories to another believer and be ready to make improvements. Make them short and to the point but do not memorize them, learn to say it from your heart.

**SECOND, KNOW WHY YOU BELIEVE.** Having a clear and concise response to the question “Why do you believe in Jesus Christ?” is really important. Just quoting Bible verses or telling events that happened to you in the past may not fully reveal why you believe in Jesus. At times, your response to this question could evolve from your adventures and experiences with God. Remember, it is important that others see your own struggles and triumphs in your relationship with God. Your faith experience doesn’t have to be spectacular, but it must be most meaningful to you! This does not mean memorized words, but the right words for the particular situation, spoken from our hearts.

Consider the blind man in Luke 9. Here is a man who was born blind and was healed when Jesus placed mud over his eyes. When the Pharisees questioned the man he said, “One thing I do know. I was
blind but now I see!” (Luke 9:25) That was certainly his “mountain top” experience!

THIRD, PUT ASIDE YOUR FEAR. Fear keeps us from sharing our faith. Fear and faith cannot operate at the same time. Paul wrote to Timothy: “For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord…” (2 Timothy 1:7-8) Jesus said to the Apostle Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.” (Acts 18:9-10)

This is still true today. We are not alone in our faith journey. God has many people in the Pacific Northwest who believe, but many more who need to hear the truth about Jesus Christ!

FOURTH, KNOW YOUR MOTIVE FOR SHARING YOUR FAITH. If it’s out of guilt, forget it. If it is just because the Bible says so, forget it. If your Pastor said you have to do it, forget it. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians and said “The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself in love.” (Gal. 5:6) When we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, our orders are clear, we are to love each other. This does not mean just our church friends, it means all, and includes strangers and even those we might consider our enemies!

Most of us don’t naturally share our stories. Some people turn us off, some make us angry, and some people are so deeply involved in things against our own convictions, that we want nothing to do with them. Too often we forget that Jesus came for the lost and sinners. And since now we follow and represent Jesus we must do the same!

In a very real way, we are the body of Christ! We are asked to FEED EVERYONE, LOVE EVERYONE; knowing that we can’t do it on our own. This leads us to the next important part of our preparation for faith sharing…

FIFTH, PRAY FOR GOD’S GUIDANCE. With God, all things are possible. Praying is a way for us to keep in constant touch with God. Praying calls us to discern and listen to what next steps God is leading us to. In any given situation, do not neglect to pray. Too often, we don’t listen to God; we get wrapped up in our projects and problems and fail to check in, we fall far short of receiving all that God has for us. But when we experience God’s leading, we realize how the Holy Spirit puts us exactly where we should be and gives us the most appropriate words to say. Even the most routine moment can become a God moment. Much of our responsibility stems out of our ability to listen and discern.
During Our Faith-Sharing (to one person)

**FIRST, LISTEN TO AND LOOK AT THE PERSON.** The most effective form of faith sharing is “friend-to-friend”. With our friends, there can be numerous opportunities to show our support and deep concern. But, we need to carefully pray and work for the right time and place when sharing our faith story. First, pray and listen for God’s guidance. Then listen to the person and watch for any facial expressions or body language that might indicate their openness to listening. Avoid interrupting them. If they are talking, listen. If they are busy working on something, wait until there are fewer distractions. A “just right” moment in the conversation may or may not come, so be prepared. Make sure we check and ask if it’s OK to share one of our faith stories. We must remember that God will nudge us when to share and what to share. We must always think of the other person as loved by God and never as our target. Remember, we share because we love!

**SECOND, NOTICE YOUR SURROUNDINGS.** Are there too many distractions to enable good conversation? Is it too noisy? Will you be able to hear and be heard? If not, choose another time to share. If it seems like a good time to share, there may be something in the surroundings, like a picture on the wall that might trigger a thought of family. This may be one way to connect and create the opportunity to share. It is critical to listen.

**THIRD, BE VULNERABLE.** At any time during the conversation, you may be asked questions. If you honestly don’t know the answer, say something like “I don’t know, but I’ll try to find out.” We should never act like we know all the answers, or even bluff an answer. And to the best of your ability, follow up and try to find the answer for the person! Remember, we are not to tell them why to believe or what to believe, instead, tell them why and what you believe!

**FINALLY, SHARE YOUR FAITH STORY.** You might begin with a comment like, “I don’t have all the answers, but I do know what I have experienced.” And then share your faith story. Please don’t expect a response or push for a response. Consider your sharing as a seed planted! Leave the rest up to God.

1. LISTEN TO AND LOOK AT THE PERSON.
2. NOTICE YOUR SURROUNDINGS.
3. BE VULNERABLE.
4. SHARE YOUR FAITH STORY.
During Your Faith-Sharing (to a gathering of people)

When invited to speak before a group, be well prepared and allow the Holy Spirit to lead you. Prayer and preparation are key ingredients of an effectively shared faith story. Just as Cornelius and his whole household were touched by the Holy Spirit and ready to hear what Peter had to say, God can open doors and prepare the way if we listen (Acts 10:42-43).

As you speak:
- Avoid just reading or speaking a memorized talk
- Maintain eye contact with the gathered people
- Connect with the people (possibly ask questions?)
- Be open to the Holy Spirit’s leading (what words seem to get the most reaction?)
- Be vulnerable and possibly share faith struggles
- Share what you believe and why you believe them
- Avoid any expression of self pride
- Give all the credit to God!

Since 75% of the people in the Pacific Northwest have nothing to do with the church, we are tasked with sharing our faith and new life in Jesus Christ. We can make a difference! But before we speak, we need to:

- Know what and why we believe in Jesus Christ
- Learn to control our fears
- Be vulnerable
- Be motivated by Jesus’ command to love
- Pray for God’s guidance

After our Faith Sharing

When we have shared our faith story with an individual, that person may ask for more information about becoming a disciple of Jesus. They may even acknowledge an awareness of God’s nudging to become a Christian. What do we do? If the setting, available time and other factors are not favorable for a deeper conversation, ask for meeting at a more convenient time.

Explain that making a commitment to be a disciple of Jesus is only the beginning. We need to continually study our “Field Manual” (the Bible), especially the New Testament. Share the importance of spending time with other disciples of Jesus in order to grow (Bible Study or Sunday School). Being in a regular worship setting is an important practice a Christian should take part of. Pray with and for the person, saying it out loud if needed. Remind them that God is but a prayer away. Make sure you have a way of keeping connected with each other.

Our Own Commitment

As we begin to do this important work, we need to make a personal re-commitment of our lives to Jesus Christ as our Lord. By speaking of our own need of the Holy Spirit, we lay up our lives before God. During this time of prayer, realize that you are about to be used by God in ways you have not thought possible. Let the exciting work of evangelism begin!

- Suggested guidelines for the prayer:
  - Give God thanks and praise
  - Recognize that we are vessels of the Holy Spirit, imperfect and in need of redemption
  - Confess our sins, seeking forgiveness from God and the strength to seek it from those we have wronged
  - Ask God to fill us with the Holy Spirit, leading us on toward perfection
  - Become the Body of Christ in our words and actions

These guidelines have been prepared by The Pacific Northwest Conference Bishop’s Task Force on Evangelism