

2025 02 16 John 4:25-30
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Find Your God Story

Last week, we discussed the significance of the Dinner Table of Jesus. Around a dinner table, meaningful connections are made. Sharing a meal is an ideal setting for getting to know someone, fostering dialogue, and even engaging in respectful disagreements. This makes it an ideal place to express and share the love of God. Dinner table may seem ordinary, but when we invite God, it transforms into a radically ordinary and welcoming table. The world is filled with strangers, and sadly, one-quarter of the population struggles with loneliness. Despite our best efforts, including powerful sermons and captivating music, a staggering 60% of the population remains uninterested in attending church. They desperately need God's warm and hopeful embrace.

When we open doors and reach out to those in need, the gospel naturally flows through those doors and into the dinner table. We're planning to start a Dinner Church where we'll invite those who know they are struggling, just like Jesus did. In this space, strangers will become neighbors, and they can't go back to being strangers.

So, let's talk about how we can share our faith stories. We want to spread God's love to those who haven't experienced it yet. We pray that God will give us that chance. When we interact with non-believers, there are a few things we need to keep in mind. People don't like the formal church stuff, like rules and regulations, institutionalism, or legalism. That's not really about the Christian spirit or about Jesus. People like to talk about Jesus and want to know more about Jesus, but they don't like the institutional church. I want to bring an example of our ministry project Dinner Church.

How can we make our guests feel at home? Let's create a warm and inviting space. When they first enter, the beautiful buffet table with delicious food and soothing church music sets a great tone. A friendly smile, a hug, a greeting are all important parts of making them feel welcome. This makes people feel comfortable and relaxed, like they're part of the family.

When we talk to strangers, there are three main levels to our conversations. It's important to be humble and remember that we don't know what others are going through. We can't even imagine how deep their lives are. And guess what? No one in the world can really understand you. Is it right? So, let's approach conversations with a humility before the profound human lives.

Simple questions like "Can you tell me about yourself?" and really listening well are key to building a real connection with people. You will talk various life themes. You listen attentively, giving them our full attention. When there's a chance, you can share your own experiences as well. But not too much, let them speak first. Ask clarifying questions like, "Can you tell me more? Is that what you mean?" Acknowledge their feelings, encourage them, and offer hope. This is the first layer of conversation. If we continue, we can enter the second layer, which is their limitations and struggles. We can share our own experiences as well only just a little, let them lead the conversation. We listen carefully and learn from them.

Once the second layer conversation is over, the third layer of discussion begins. This is where they explore ways to overcome their limitations. It's a spiritual layer, and they might resort to substances like drugs or alcohol. When the time feels right, you can ask them, "Would you be open to sharing my story?" You can share your own God stories and testimonies. You don't know how much you can share, but it could be the whole story or just a part of it. Every time is different, but you should prepare. Learn to prepare a short and impactful story that can convey the love and reality of God, which is incredibly powerful.

So, with the listening skill, now you need a your God story to share with the new friends at the table. I talked my God-story probably more than hundreds of times through my life. It became always refreshing my soul remembering the love of God again and again. It is like going back to my own fountain that nobody can drink from.

I'm curious to know about your personal journey with God. What was your life like before you found faith? What challenges did you face? And how did God transform your life? These are the core elements of any great story. We don't have to force anyone to become a Christian. Instead, we simply pray for them and trust that God will work in their lives. And trust me, God does work. It might take time, but the harvest is truly God's.

The woman at the well said, 'Jesus is greater than Jacob, the prophet.' And then Jesus revealed himself as the Messiah. Be at peace with whatever the person says. God will show Himself to the person you speak to. God made all humans in His image. God knows how to let people know God. Humans can't miss it. Just like when the divine power touched our hearts, we can feel something incredible stirring within us.

The woman at the well couldn't stay there and went down to the village. She talked to people what Jesus said and revealed about her life. Her invitation to come to Jesus had a big effect, and the whole village came to Jesus, and believed that He must be the long-awaited Messiah!

I'm curious to hear about your personal story with God. If you're a Christian, I'm sure you have a rich and meaningful narrative to share. Can you try to condense it into a minute or so? It's like a little story that you can hold close to your heart. Whenever God gives you a chance, you'll naturally want to share a part of that story. Here are three short stories for you to listen to. Let's dive in!

The first Story. So back when my husband and I were thinking of splitting up I had this thing happen to me. I had gotten involved in a church but I was very confused about God and my marriage. One day I was in the church parking lot thinking to myself, "I'm pretty screwed up. I should talk to somebody." I meant a counselor. Then I thought, "If I'm going to talk to someone, maybe it should be God." I mean, I thought that sarcastically. And then I thought, "Well if I'm going to talk to God, God must be real." I got this feeling of warmth that started at the top of my head and shot through my body. I found out later that was called a "radical conversion." God was real to me after that. It changed my life. My husband and I worked through our difficulties and I'm so grateful for that. I remember what it was like before God and I'm never going back.

As you listen, it is short, and you understand what the impact of the God moment has given to the writer. After you learn your testimony backwards and forwards and then begin to do dedicated outreach in the mission field. You'll find that the majority of what you share is snippets of your story. This short testimony is often called an elevator pitch or an elevator speech.

Here is the **second** God-story. I grew up in a super strict house where divorce was considered a sin. Guess what? I got divorced. I had two teenage daughters and no income because I didn't work because it was against my husband's wishes. We were not doing well and I was extremely depressed. I had let everyone down, my parents, my daughters, myself, God. It's a hard thing to say out loud, but I was in my kitchen late one night with this sharp butcher knife staring me in the face. I thought, wow, it would be really easy to end things right now. I picked up the knife with the intention of doing harm to myself. And then I hear this voice saying to me, "You are good, and you are mine." I knew it was God. I kind of had never not thought of myself as a Christian. But at that moment I realized I didn't know what it meant to be one because right then I felt acceptance and love for the first time. As I put down the knife, life began to look ... better.

Here is the **third** story, which might be similar one for some of us. Jesus has always been part of my life. Except there was this time when I think I realized I was really who I said I was. I was pretty young too, like 7. I had this friend and she was super unpopular. She was living with her grandmother, who was a friend of my mom's. One day my friend said she was going to see her mom in a place where she was trying to get better. I asked my mom about that and my mom said how T had been through so much and how proud she was of me for being so kind to T. I started praying for T and her mom. That's been my practice my whole life. It has made me a lot more understanding and accepting than maybe I would have been without that perspective. So many people have so much guilt. If people knew the kind of grace and love that Jesus offers, maybe they'd give themselves a break. That's my prayer, a lot.

All these stories have backstories, conflicts, and denouements. I will give you a homework assignment. Please write one minute's God-story. And send it to the office to Aimee. Whenever the Holy Spirit nudges you, you will confidently calmly share a short part of your God-story. The Holy Spirit will use you when you are ready. People need the Lord desperately. So many things in Christianity sent people distorted pictures of God. I remember that God told me, "Talk to people how much I love them!" They will be loved, comforted, empowered, and excel in life on Earth as children of God. We are partners with God to give the most beautiful life to people.