

Branches

One simple, flexible tool: Stories big and small

Week 4 Notes

I'm always thinking through what we can do to make Branches better. I recently asked my friend Ericson about what he found most helpful in Branches and he told me it was thinking of how he can communicate God's work in his life to others. He told me, "knowing my story made it easy to bring it up in conversation with others and be able to point them to Christ through my experiences."

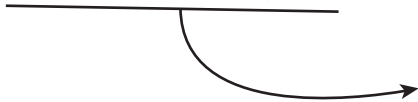
Small Stories



Big Stories



3 parts of a Big Story



It's helpful to think of communicating God's work in our lives in two categories. The first is our Big Story -this is the story that is formed over our life time, and displays YHWH's ultimate grace in our life. Well if the first type is a Big Story, you can guess what the second type is... A Small Story is roughly defined as God's continued work in our life on a daily basis. God is constantly moving in our lives in powerful ways and we have the opportunity to communicate that to others! Telling a small story might be as simple as "Man I have this big project, but I've really been trying to draw near the Lord, and I feel his peace about it."

A story of a christian's interaction with God on a macro scale is often called a testimony. Personally, I prefer the phrase "big story" or if I'm being more conversational I might just ask, "what's your story?" I prefer the word story to testimony because it takes us out of a place of christian evangelical norms and into a place where what we are saying makes sense in a secular setting, which is what this class is all about, right? We are thinking through, "how do I connect with this person in a way that makes sense to them."

Everyone's story has three parts:

1. Before
2. Salvation
3. Since then

So once we write out our stories in a typical fashion with a before, during, and after section, we then are trulng putting it to it's best use when we are able to bring out pieces of it into normal conversation with others. But to know how to use the fragments of your big story we need to first know the whole of it. So every story goes like this: Before I walked with Jesus, I encountered Jesus, How my life has changed/How he is walking with me still. Each piece is vital to communicating the gospel at work in our lives. A quick note, there are no boring stories, only boring story tellers. Many people have grown up around the church and they think that because they haven't fallen into drugs, or stolen, or whatever extreme you can imagine, that they don't have a good story to tell. The truth is that every story is truly incredible and that we only need to figure out how to tell it in a compelling way. Maybe if you are falling into the trap of thinking your story insignificant you need to dive deeper into what Jesus has saved you from and to, or maybe even analyze if things aren't really different then perhaps the first step is to begin to follow him as King right now! When Jesus is Lord, things look differently, they have to! Also, a couple of quick pointers for when you're writing out your story: 1) Avoid christianese - use words and phrases that anyone will understand 2) Consider choosing a theme in your story and repeat that theme in all three phases (IE I suffered from depression, Jesus met me in midst of my depression, Jesus walks with me as I cling to him through lapses of depression since that point).