



# TELLING YOUR STORY

## Amazing Grace

March 4, 2023

### 1 PREPARING

#### A. THE SOURCE

**Isaiah 43:10-12** • “‘You are My witnesses,’ says the Lord, ‘and My servant whom I have chosen, That you may know and believe Me, and understand that I am He. Before Me there was no God formed, nor shall there be after Me. I, even I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior. I have declared and saved, I have proclaimed, and there was no foreign god among you; therefore you are My witnesses,’ says the Lord, ‘that I am God.’”

**Acts 26:17, 18** • “I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”

**Deuteronomy 6:20-25** • “When your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord our God has commanded you?’ then you shall say to your son: ‘We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the Lord showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household. Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers. And the Lord com-

manded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day. Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us.’”

**Psalms 66:16** • “Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul.”

**John 21:24, 25** • “This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.”

(See additional passages in student material.)

#### B. WHAT'S TO BE SAID ABOUT “TELLING YOUR STORY”

What would you say about your faith and why you are a Christian? This lesson will explore the components of a person's personal story and the impact it has on others for communicating the gospel. This lesson will also examine the conversion stories of people of faith in the Bible, as well as our own conversion experience. The outcome of this lesson will be a thoughtful consideration of the stories that can shape and encourage teens. Some of the major questions students will explore are: What personal

stories and experiences have made me who I am? When did I really talk to God about my eternal destiny, or whether I was going to accept His sacrifice? When did it become very real to me? What is different about my life/mind-set since then?

### C. WHERE WE'RE GOING WITH "TELLING YOUR STORY"

As a result of this lesson we would like the students to be able to:

1. Examine the power of conversion stories.
2. Discover how our personal conversion stories are shaped and communicated.
3. Demonstrate the makeup of a personal testimony based upon biblical stories.

### D. MATERIALS NEEDED

**Beginning** • (Activity A) paper, pens or pencils; (Activity B) three chairs.

**Connecting** • Bibles, student lessons, pens or pencils, handout on p. 85, white/chalkboard, markers/chalk.

**Applying** • Paper, pens or pencils.

## 2 BRIDGING

### A. WHERE WE'VE BEEN BEFORE

**Allow 10 minutes as students are arriving to:**

1. Share anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
2. Engage anything that was meaningful to them in this lesson.
3. Say the Bible memory text either individually or in a group.

### B. OTHER SABBATH SCHOOL COMPONENTS

- >> Song service
- >> Mission emphasis (find a link for

*Adventist Mission for Youth and Adult* at [www.realtimefaith.net](http://www.realtimefaith.net))

>> Service project reports

## 3 BEGINNING

**NOTE TO TEACHER:** Put together your own program with options from the categories below—Beginning, Connecting, Applying, and Closing. Please keep in mind, however, that the students need to have an opportunity to be interactive (participate actively *and* with one another) and to study from the Word.

### A. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

**Get ready** • The purpose of this exercise is to give students an opportunity to write down their conversion experience. The students will create a story about when and how they accepted Jesus in their lives. They need paper and something to write with.

**Get set • Say:** Today we are going to talk about our encounters with Jesus. Before we get into our topic, we can practice storytelling.

**Say:** I want you to write a story about how you came to know Jesus. First, think of an object that reminds you of that moment (for example, a Bible). The next thing you need to think of is a place where you were when you accepted Jesus as your personal Savior, and finally think of a person who encouraged you or helped you respond to Jesus. OK. We're ready!

**Go • Say:** I want you to write your story about how you accepted Jesus in your heart. Please include an object, the setting, and a person who was your spiritual guide/mentor. You have five minutes. Go!

When the time is up, have the students read their stories to each other and then share them with the class.

**Debriefing • Ask:** Why do you respond so well to sermons with lots of stories? What sermons do you remember well because of a story? Why do you think stories so powerfully lodge themselves into our memory while lists and facts leave our brains more easily?

## B. BEGINNING ACTIVITY

**Get ready •** There is a storytelling game called The Expert. The object is to get three people (sitting up front in chairs) to respond to interview questions as though the three were one person—an expert. Starting from left to right each member of The Expert is allowed to say only one word at a time. Their goal is not only to answer the questions but to do so in the form of a story, if at all possible. The teacher will be the interviewer. He or she should choose three students ahead of time who would be willing to model this exercise and possibly practice it together before going before the rest of the class

**Get set •** Set up the front of the class like a talk show. Make sure The Expert members know what their job is: to speak as one person and to try to effectively tell a complete, coherent story as one.

**Go •** The three chairs for The Expert should be close together to give the impression of one person. The game should be introduced as follows:

**Say:** “Welcome to The Expert! During this show we bring in an expert and interview them for helpful information to improve our lives. Our expert today is a leading specialist in breaking bad habits. (Choose your own topic.)

**Say:** OK, let’s begin. We have a few questions for you today:

**Ask:** What are some of your hobbies? What do you like most about those/those particular activity?

What did you do before you became the

leading specialist of (breaking bad habits)?

**Say:** Tell us your favorite experience of (helping someone to break bad habits).

(The object is to get them to tell a story.)

**Debriefing • Ask:** What do you think are some important aspects of any story? (relevant, exciting, realistic, believable) What were you thinking about when the expert was talking? (I was wondering what they would say next. We were thinking what we would say.) In what way does a story connect us as people? How can it separate us?

## C. BEGINNING ILLUSTRATION

**In your own words, tell the following story:**

The story is told of Jacob Koshy, a young man who grew up in Singapore. He focused his life on attaining money and possessions at any cost even if it meant breaking the law. As a result he was imprisoned. Jacob was addicted to smoking, and in prison he made his cigarettes using the pages of a Gideon Bible.

One night he fell asleep while smoking his cigarette wrapped in a page from the Bible and awoke to find the tobacco had burned up, but a scrap of charred paper remained. He unrolled what was left of the paper and read: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” Desperately curious about the nature of such a story, Jacob requested another Bible and read the whole story of Saul’s encounter with God. If God could restore a man like Saul, maybe He could redeem Jacob as well. Jacob prayed to God in his cell and began to share his story with other prisoners. After serving his sentence and being released from prison, Jacob married a Christian woman and continued to share his story about how God miraculously reached out to him in prison through the pages of His Word.

**Debriefing • Ask:** When you hear a story like this, what is your reaction? How do the stories of others help us in our relationship with God?

## 4 CONNECTING

### A. CONNECTING TO THE KINGDOM

Present the following ideas in your own words:

The story of the kingdom of God is really a series of little stories of people who lived as citizens in God's kingdom. The stories can be ordinary or extraordinary. All the moments have a special place in God's memory, but not all of the story can be told. Even John declares this when he says, "This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written" (John 21:24, 25).

But what is told is for the purpose of bringing people closer to God. This is the purpose and the power of the personal testimony—the story about what God has done for you. No other sermon, no matter how clever, punchy, power-packed, or animated, will ever cause more change than someone's personal story.

If you look at the stories that change people, you'll notice that they usually have three parts: (1) my life before personally encountering God, (2) an encounter with God in which I became aware of my need of Him and received His grace for me, and (3) the difference it has made in my life since I gave my heart to God. While some struggle to identify a "single moment" in which they encountered God, one can usually think of some specific, significant events when they felt God's presence. Those events may not be anything like a violent storm on the sea, but the encounter with God is as real as any dramatic moment captured in a well-known story. The important thing about these types of stories is that all of them tend to show a changed life.

### B. CONNECTING TO THE LESSON ILLUSTRATION

Ask someone beforehand to read or tell the story from Sabbath's section of the lesson.

**Ask:** In what way does the story of Newton's life bring new meaning to the well-known song "Amazing Grace" that is a timeless testimony of God's grace? Parts of his story are very ordinary, and parts are quite dramatic. The power of the story is not in the miracle of the storm as much as it is in the miracle of how his life changed afterward. How do you explain the way God turned his life around? Do you know someone who has had a similar experience? What kinds of events does God use to wake us up?

### C. CONNECTING TO LIFE

Pose the following scenario:

Two stories are told in church one day. One story comes from someone who wasted his life and hit rock bottom. The change in this person's life after he accepted Jesus in his heart is dramatic. Another story is told by someone who grew up in the church and can't really remember any dramatic moments in her life. Instead, she simply shares stories about events like summer camp or a role model who displayed God's love to her.

The dramatic story and the ordinary one both indicate to those hearing them how much the teller loves God, and they both cause those hearing them to want to commit themselves to serving God for the rest of their lives.

**Ask:** How is each story a powerful tool for God's kingdom? How is it important to realize that you don't need to live the life of a prodigal to experience a wonderful transformation when you accept Jesus in your heart?

**Present the following ideas in your own words:**

Consider how Paul, whose conversion story is pretty dramatic, honors and elevates Timothy's story: "But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:14, 15).

Paul admires Timothy for his faithful life. Paul entrusted Timothy, a young person who grew up in the church, with the ministry of the church and considers him a great leader. Coming from a person who was struck down on the Damascus road, this is a great testimony to the value of each story in the community of believers.

Have students get into groups of four or five and work on the exercise in the handout. The handout contains five biblical stories of people who experienced different kinds of encounters with God. Each person in each group should be assigned a story.

## **5** APPLYING

### **GLOBAL YOUTH DAY**

Continue to plan a project for Global Youth Day. This event will happen on March 18, 2023. To learn more about Global Youth Day, you may visit [www.youth.adventist.org](http://www.youth.adventist.org). Think of creative ways to participate with your Sabbath School class in a community service project or a mission initiative on that day.

#### **A. APPLICATION ACTIVITY**

Divide the students into groups of two to four and invite them to share a story from their life in which they experienced:

- God answering a prayer.
- God opening a door for them (opportunity).
- God providing for their needs.

God protecting them in a miraculous way.  
God speaking to them in a still small voice.

In addition to telling their story, invite the students to make a connection between their story and a biblical story by asking, "What story in the Bible is like your story?" For some who have had God provide basic necessities in a time of need, they might choose the feeding of the 5,000 or Elijah by the brook.

Invite the students to fill out the worksheet that calls for five stories from their lives that were important in making them who they are today. Students can share their list with others if they want to. Some might have traumatic scenarios that would be uncomfortable to talk about so it might be better to keep this open-ended. For those who might want to share, allow them to do so and ask them why they chose those stories. Have a student read the following passages from the Bible: John 20:30, 31 and John 21:24, 25.

**Debriefing • Ask: Why do you think it's good to connect our story to other stories in Scripture? Everyone has hundreds of stories to tell; what criteria did you use to choose the stories that were most meaningful to your life?**

#### **B. APPLICATION QUESTIONS**

1. When you look back at the past, in what areas of your life have you seen God at work the most?
2. Do you know someone who has had a dramatic conversion story?
3. Do you know someone who has had a quiet, still small voice experience?
4. How does telling your story or testimony to someone else strengthen your own faith?
5. Who do you think might be encouraged the most by hearing your testimony this week?

## 6 CLOSING

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### SUMMARY

**In your own words, conclude with the following ideas:**

One of the most meaningful moments you can ever have in your walk with God is when

you reflect on your relationship with Him. Maybe your story has a miracle moment, or maybe it's quiet but very real to you. Either way, your story is 10 times more meaningful when you share it with someone else. But first, take some time to think about your journey. Then pray that God will help you have the courage to share your story with someone who might need encouragement.

# FOR LESSON NINE:

THIS HANDOUT IS FOR THE "CONNECTING TO LIFE" ACTIVITY.

**DIRECTIONS:** After dividing into groups of four or five, assign each person one of the following stories to read and respond to. Then have everyone in the group share their insights.

- 1. Saul/Paul (read Acts 26)
- 2. Demon-possessed man (read Mark 5)
- 3. The blind man who was healed by Jesus (read John 9)
- 4. The Samaritan woman at the well (read John 4)
- 5. The leper who couldn't be silent (read Mark 1:40-45)

Now, take a few minutes to write down your thoughts on the following:

- 1. Describe their life before they encountered Christ.

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- 2. Identify the moment when they experienced an encounter with God.

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- 3. Point out how their life was changed by the experience.

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Share your insights and the answers to the above statements with the rest of your group. How do the stories differ? What components are similar? Which person do you identify with most? Why?

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## STUDENT LESSON

### TELLING YOUR STORY Amazing Grace

March 4, 2023

#### Sabbath FOR STUDY

- » **Memory Text:** “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).
- » **Our Beliefs, no. 10, The Experience of Salvation:** “This saving faith comes through the divine power of the Word and is the gift of God’s grace. Through Christ we are justified. . . . Through the Spirit we are born again. . . . Abiding in Him, we become partakers of the divine nature and have the assurance of salvation now and in the judgment.”
- » Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 46, 47.

#### AMAZING GRACE

John Newton’s story has made a difference in many people’s lives who came to know God. Born in the early 1700s, John was the son of a commander of a merchant ship; he grew up sailing the Mediterranean Sea with his father. After his father retired, John continued to sail on voyages as a midshipman until being demoted to seaman for desertion.

His life seemingly took a turn for the worse when John became the servant of a slave trader, working on a slave ship. Eventually John became a commander of his own slave ship. John had

completely given up on any religious notions he might have gleaned from his mother as a child. He grew to be a hateful, cynical man lacking in moral goodness.

This was his story, until it changed as fast as the weather on the open seas. John Newton was returning on a homeward voyage when he ran straight into a violent storm, causing him to squeeze out a cry for help: “Lord, have mercy on us!” Later that night, after the storm had subsided, John quietly reflected about his encounter with God. The seeds of grace that were planted in his heart that night, May 10, 1748, grew, and he gave his life to God. As a result of his experience he wrote “Amazing Grace.” Read it and try to get an insight into this man’s story.

Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

’Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed!

The Lord has promised good to me,  
His word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures.

Through many dangers, toils, and snares,  
I have already come;  
’Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.



When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we'd first begun.

### Sunday

## RESPONDING

- » Read Ephesians 4:4-10.
- » Fifteen-year-old Cynthia called the other day with a heavy heart. She doesn't feel as if she has a close walk with God because she can't remember a specific moment when she gave her life to Him. "I know I have asked God into my heart so many times, but that's the way it has been all my life."
- » How do you know when you've really given your life to God? What encouragement, insight, or good advice would you give to Cynthia?

### Monday

## BIBLE ANSWERS ON THE EXPERIENCE OF SALVATION

- » Read John 3:16; Mark 9:23, 24; Hebrews 10:23.
- » God's love for us is so great that He sent His only Son, Jesus, to save us from sin. He couldn't imagine life through eternity without us. Even if we may struggle with doubt, when we seek Him and cry out to God for help, He is faithful and will help us. We can trust the Word of God, who promised to never leave us.
- » Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that He came to earth to live and die for you so that you might be forgiven and have eternal life? Have you accepted Him as your personal Savior? If so, how can you affirm your commitment to Jesus? If not, what is stopping you?

- » What is your favorite text that helps you through difficult times and assures you of God's love and faithfulness? Write it here.
- » God has called us to be His ambassadors—to tell others what He has done for us. Using the words listed below, fill in the missing words. Some words are used more than once. The verse is taken from the New King James Version.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a \_\_\_\_\_ creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become \_\_\_\_\_. Now all things are of God, who has reconciled \_\_\_\_\_ to Himself \_\_\_\_\_ Jesus Christ, and has \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ the word of \_\_\_\_\_. Now then, \_\_\_\_\_ are \_\_\_\_\_ for Christ, as \_\_\_\_\_ God were \_\_\_\_\_: \_\_\_\_\_ implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:17-21).

ambassadors	committed	given
new	pleading	through
reconciliation	us	we
ministry	though	

### Tuesday

## REFLECTING

- » Read Romans 10:17.
- » When the children of Israel were on the edge of the Promised Land, they received instruction from God on what to say when their children had questions about God's law. You can read it in Deuteronomy 6:20-22: "When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord our

God has commanded you?’ then you shall say to your son: ‘We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the Lord showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household.’”

- » God was saying, “When the children cry out for answers, give them your story. Tell them about walking through the Red Sea. Try and recount the way manna was sent from heaven. Tell them your story.” God’s great answer to the questions teens ask is a story. Your story. Stories about what God has done for you are your most effective witnessing tool.
- » “Have there not been some bright spots in your experience? . . . Will you not let their beauty and sweetness fill your heart with joy?” (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 117).

### Wednesday BIBLE INSIGHTS

- » Chose from the references listed below and write the correct reference after each phrase. All verses are taken from the New King James Version of the Bible (available online from [www.Biblegateway.com](http://www.Biblegateway.com)).

Psalm 66:16      Romans 10:17  
John 21:24, 25    Isaiah 43:10-12  
Mark 9:23, 24    Mark 5:18-20

“ . . . faith comes by hearing . . . ” \_\_\_\_\_  
“ . . . the world itself could not contain the books . . . ” \_\_\_\_\_  
“ . . . therefore you are My witnesses . . . ” \_\_\_\_\_  
“ . . . I will declare what He has done . . . ” \_\_\_\_\_  
“ . . . go home to your friends, and tell them . . . ” \_\_\_\_\_  
“ . . . all things are possible to him who believes . . . ” \_\_\_\_\_

### Thursday CONNECTING

- » Read Psalm 66:16.
- » Review the memory text.
- » The demon-possessed man, after being healed by Christ was clinging to Jesus, begging the Lord to let him stay by His side. But the words of Christ are as sure today as they were for that man long ago: “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.’ And he departed and began to proclaim in Decapolis all that Jesus had done for him; and all marveled” (Mark 5:19, 20).
- » Can you imagine how people would be changed by such a testimony? One of the ways we experience consistency and growth in our lives is by simply telling our story. Not only does it then live in another person’s mind, but it awakens new life in our own. Try it. Tell someone about what God has done for you. Describe how you feel about God’s mercy and grace. Write it in a letter if you have no one to tell, but do something. Your walk with God will improve when you share what the Savior has done for you. No doubt.
- » “If we have tasted and seen that the Lord is good we shall have something to tell” (Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 78).

### Friday APPLYING

- » Read Isaiah 43:10-12.
- » What five stories have made a big difference in who you are today?
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

My Encounter With God

4. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- » The following is a simple outline to help you construct your own personal testimony, your story about what God has done for you. It's important to be as specific as possible with your stories.

My Life as a Result of My Encounter With God

My Life Before I Encountered God

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