**TEACHING NOTES**

7

**Session 7**

**6-7 March 2023**

**B.L.E.S.S. Book, Chapter 7:**

pg 116, box 🡒 Note we are told to share our stories “in a way that is clear, concise and compelling.” In other words, don’t just ramble or try to “wing it”: *structure* it!

pg 117-120 🡒 “Jesus Shares His Story”. Wait a minute! What does Dave mean about Jesus sharing his story? Jesus didn’t need to be saved. He’s the *Savior*, not the “savee”! When Jesus tells *his* story, he refers to himself with two titles that give Nicodemus insights that must have been shocking to him initially: Jesus first identifies himself with the “son of man” mentioned in Daniel 7:9-14. **Read the passage.** This is clearly a reference to the coming Messiah, so Jesus is telling Nicodemus, “*I* *am* the Messiah,” just as he would tell the woman at the well in the very next chapter of John, “I—the one speaking with you right now—am the Messiah.” But Jesus goes on to tell Nicodemus that not only is he the “Son of Man”, he is also the “Son of God”—which Nicodemus would understand to mean that Jesus was claiming equality with God. **People need to clearly understand who Jesus is** **if they are to put their trust in him, so our stories must show that Jesus Christ has done something for us that only God could do.**

pg 119, box 🡒 “Being a follower of Jesus means moving from unbelief to belief in *every* area of our lives. *All of us have areas where we still live in unbelief.* **One of the best things we can do is to tell the Gospel to ourselves.”** Hence the current emphasis in our ladies’ Bible classes on finding the gospel in each of the New Testament books we study!

pg 120-123, “Reluctant Reasons #1-3” 🡒

1. “What if someone asks a question that I can’t answer?” Dave rightly points out in the middle of page 121 that we will NOT have all the answers to people’s most challenging questions—but we DO have the Holy Spirit to help us. Sometimes the Holy Spirit will give us the words right then. But if not, we can humbly admit, “I don’t know the answer to that. Let me see what I can find out and get back to you.” *An example: Tom was teaching the adult Sunday School class two weeks ago, and one man questioned the use of the word “wages” in one verse on the handout Tom had given everyone. It was in reference to the fact that God will reward us for the things we have done for Him in this life. The man said that wages are something you earn and deserve; but God doesn’t owe us anything. At the time Tom didn’t have an answer for him. But when we got home, we did some research and discovered that the Greek word that had been translated “wages” in that verse was usually translated “reward”. Tom also compared several versions of the Bible (KJV, ESV, NTSB, HCSB, etc.) and found that all of them except for the ESV had used the word “reward” to translate the Greek word in that particular verse. So Tom printed out all that information for the gentleman and gave it to him this past Sunday. He wanted him to know that he hadn’t just blown off his question as unimportant.*
2. “I don’t want to impose my beliefs on my friends and family.” I liked the point Dave made at the very end of this section, on page 122: “Your story is compelling—not imposing—because it’s *your* story of how *you* found the love of God in Jesus.” All you are doing is saying, “Hey, this is what happened to me.” Think of it this way: if you were in a terrible accident and miraculously survived, would you feel like you were imposing on people when you told them about your rescue? Or suppose you have an urgent need for $500 and have no idea where the money will come from. Then you go to your mailbox and find a card with a check for $500 in it, totally unexpected. Would you feel like you were imposing on people if you shared that incident of God’s incredible provision? No, you would just be sharing something very special and very real that God had done in your life.
3. “I don’t feel comfortable sharing my story.” My own advice as a teacher is that **taking the time to** **prepare well** for presenting your story will go a long way toward reducing the discomfort you feel. Once you have worked on it and practiced it so that it rolls off your tongue, pray specifically that God will create an opportunity for you to share it!

pg 124-129, **How To Share Your Story** 🡒 I want to build on what Dave shares at the bottom of page 126 under the heading “Your Story”. He mentions having various versions of your story for different audiences, different situations, and different time frames. Tom and I have had to do this in other contexts: preparing a 5-minute, a 15-minute, and a 30-minute presentation for our ministry overseas so we would be ready to keep within whatever time frame a given pastor allowed us. Tom and I also had to come up with different versions of the purpose statements for the schools we ran. There was the single word summary, the one sentence statement, and a 12-15 minute video (for Tom’s trade school) or PowerPoint (Edie’s textbook revision). *Examples: “The Bengali Language School exists to equip believers with the skills they need to do what God called them to do in Bangladesh”* and *“Chittagong Trade School exists to give young men in Bangladesh a better life.”* We also have various versions of “Our Story” that we modify for different age groups. But no matter how long or how short a version is, the three-part outline Dave shares, based on the way the once blind man told his story to everyone around him, is very practical and helpful. In every version, you describe your life *before* Jesus, *how you met* Jesus, and your life *since* you met him. The STRUCTURE will remain the same; the AMOUNT OF DETAIL will vary.

1. One Sentence Version: The blind man’s testimony was, “Once I was blind, but Jesus touched me, and now I can see!” If you have watched the episode of “The Chosen” in which Mary Magdalene gives her testimony, it is very similar: “I used to be one way. Now I am different…and what happened in between was Him.” This is what one mentor calls the “the cocktail party introduction version” or what you would say to someone you sit next to on an airplane. As you can see, there are no details, just the bare facts…but they are very important facts!

Maybe you wonder if one short statement is worth the effort. Think of it this way: a well crafted statement opens the door for further conversation with those who are intrigued with what you shared and want to hear more. Do you remember how we opened the very first class by telling where we first heard the gospel with understanding? Didn’t hearing that particular detail about someone make you want to know more?

1. Three to Five Minute Version: This is what you would prepare for someone that you are developing a friendship with and what we will share with each other in class. There will be time for some details, but not all. Keep your story short and practice it *out loud* (maybe in the bathroom with the door shut!) with a watch or timer so you keep track of how long it takes. Time is important! You don’t want to create a monologue that will make your friend duck out of sight and run the next time she sees you coming! And we want to honor each other by leaving time for everyone to share.

pg 131 🡒 **Ask God for an Opportunity to Share Your Story**. That heading says it all. You just don’t know how powerful your story can be. Or how it could be a seed planted that will bear fruit down the line, as happened in the story of Jen (middle of the page). So prepare well…and ask God to bless your efforts.