



Session 2:

My story. Your story. Our story.



Preparation

- You'll need large sheets of paper, crayons and/or drawing materials for members to complete their story exercises.
- Ensure your technology is set up and "Small Group Resource: Session 2 is ready to play."



Group check-in (5 min)

1. What's one funny or unusual thing about you that few members in this group know about?

Setting the scene (4 min)

If you can't show the video (found in the back of this resource or online at www.church.whatsyourstory.org.za), read "Creating safe spaces" below aloud to your group.

Watch: Creating safe spaces



OR

Read: Creating safe spaces

Last session we learnt that **What's Your Story?** is a tool for building a stronger sense of connectedness and community through sharing in one another's stories. We also learnt about some of the principles of Ask. Listen. Tell. in story-sharing.

Our objective in this journey is to get to grips with our own stories and the stories of others in our group. This process aims to help you gain skills to build a stronger sense of connectedness and

community. We want to make sure that we're really getting to know one another.

Sharing our story with others is not always easy. Embracing our own story can be a challenging and uncomfortable process but, sharing our story can be a gift to ourselves, and to others. We know that stories are best shared in an environment of trust and mutual respect. We call these safe, brave or courageous spaces.

We'll create these safe spaces through the principles of Ask. Listen. Tell.

The first step in knowing someone's story is simply to ask. But remember these principles and **values as you ask:**

- Seek first to understand.
- Be curious, yet respectful.
- Ask without judgement.
- Be sincere.
- Affirm as you ask.
- Be willing to also be asked.

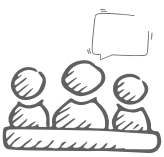
One of the most important ways to show someone respect is to listen to them. Many of us think we're good listeners, but it's important to regularly check how you are aligning to these **values as you listen:**

- Listen with your heart.
- Don't make it about you.
- Slow down as you listen.
- Don't judge.
- Don't interrupt.
- Ask clarifying questions, but only once the person has stopped talking.
- Don't give advice unless asked.
- Show empathy through an encouraging word or a prayer.

Once you've asked and taken the time to listen to someone share their story, also be ready for them to ask you to share your story. As you prepare to **tell your own story, remember these values:**

- Own your story.
- Be courageous and truthful.
- Only share as much as you feel comfortable.
- Maintain confidentiality.
- Be true to your emotions but be respectful.
- Be willing to be vulnerable.

Maintaining these values as you ask, listen and tell will help others feel heard, honoured and understood.



Group discussion (8-10 min)

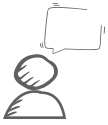
1. Which of the values of Ask. Listen. Tell. stand out for you or challenge you most?
2. In what other ways can we as a small group build a safe and courageous space for story-sharing?



Practice: Are you listening to me? (5 min)

We've heard about how listening is one of the most important ways we can show respect and honour to someone. To continue you growing our listening skills, we're going to do another listening exercise.

1. In pairs, assign one person to be the talker and the other the listener.
2. The listener asks the talker: "Tell me about one of the happiest days in your life – who was there and what made it special?"
3. The talker has one minute to answer the question. You may want to add something about how your culture shows respect; like using eye contact vs no eye contact, etc.
4. At the end, the listener must repeat what they've heard back to the talker. The talker will verify how well they have been listened to.
5. Swap roles and repeat the exercise.



Understanding my own story (5 -10 min)

It's good to ask and listen to someone else's story – but we also need to be ready to tell our own story. Getting to grips with our own story can be quite an emotional process, and can raise a lot of questions: Where do I start? What parts do I include or omit? Do I even have anything worth sharing? Do I really feel ready to share that part of my life? What will they think of me after they've heard my story?

Author Brené Brown speaks about the importance of owning your story. Your story is yours, nobody else has the same story as you. Owning your story is a gift to yourself, and to others. You are an original, designed and created by our Heavenly Father. And your story matters to Him. In fact, your story is part of His big plan to reveal His love and glory to the world.

There are various ways to tell our stories. We have put together a list of helpful storytelling tools on p. xx of this resource. Spend a few minutes reading through it and choose a method for telling your story.

Those who haven't yet done their storytelling exercise have the chance to do so now. Those who've already completed theirs can spend the next few minutes considering the following reflections (found on p. xx of the Participant's Workbook):

- What have I learnt about myself and my story through this exercise?
- In which parts of my story can I clearly see how God was with me? Which parts would I like to invite Him into to heal, redeem, or celebrate with me?
- Which parts of my story are private to me – and which am I willing to share publicly?
- In which ways do I see my story as part of a bigger, inter-connected story?



Play some gentle, soft music and allow members 5 minutes to reflect on the questions, or to complete their stories. The aim is to give members an unrushed moment of contemplation.

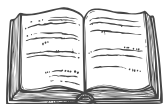


Tell: Sharing stories (10 - 20 min)

The group member(s) selected in the previous session shares their story. If you have enough time, two members can share but make sure the time is equally distributed.

After the member has shared their story, you may want to affirm them in one of the following ways:

- Say an encouraging word or identify something that inspired you from their story.
 - Say a short prayer, thanking God for the person's life and asking for His direction in some of the areas of challenge they may have shared about.
 - Write an encouraging word or blessing for them to take home.
 - If time permits, you can offer the opportunity to ask the person questions.
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Read: Hebrews 11:24-34 (10 min)

Read the scripture together.

In Hebrews 11, we read all about the stories of the great heroes of faith. God was interested in their story as much as He is interested in your story.

1. Whose life story in the Bible resembles or reflects your own story, and in what ways? Or, whose story in the Bible most inspires your own story?



Go beyond

In the week ahead, why not do the River of Life or one of the story-sharing exercises with members of your family? You could have an interesting experience by doing it with different generations (grandparents, parents and grandkids). Or, ask someone you don't know that well at work, or in another ministry team, their story.



Ask for a volunteer or nominate someone to share their story in the next session. This will help them to be prepared.



Close in prayer.