

Your Story in Three Minutes

WHAT WE FOUND

- Paul's conversion is recounted three times in Acts, twice in his own words, and he reflects on it again in Galatians 1. The shape is the same every time: before, encounter, commission.
- The details move with the room. To a Jewish crowd he speaks Hebrew, names Gamaliel, and describes Ananias as a devout man according to the law. To the hearing before Festus and Agrippa he opens with deference, appeals to the prophets, and frames the case as a matter of hope.
- He identifies with his hearers before he differs from them, and the identification is true rather than tactical.
- He names his own guilt in one clause and moves on.
- Four things he never does: make his sins the centre, describe his own feelings, make himself the hero, or end on himself. God gets the active verbs, and every telling ends on the commission.
- To Agrippa he said he would to God that everyone hearing him might become such as he was, except for the chains. He wanted them to have what he had, except for his chains.
- If you were baptized as an infant and never left, one workable shape is: what I was handed, what I came to own, and what I do about it now. Your baptism was a real rescue that you do not remember.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Augustine, whose *Confessions* is one of the most influential conversion narratives in Christian literature

The *Confessions* is a conversion story, and its most striking feature is grammatical: the whole book is addressed to God rather than to the reader. Augustine is not narrating his journey to an audience; he is telling God what God did, out loud, and letting us listen.

That is the discipline this module is teaching in miniature. When the second person of a testimony is God rather than the hearer, the story stops being about the speaker without anyone having to be told to be humble.

St. Augustine, Confessions. Work-level citation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. Cyprian, on what he thought was impossible

Writing to his friend Donatus shortly after his own baptism, St. Cyprian describes in substance how he had believed that the change being asked of him was simply not achievable for a man of his habits, and how, after the water of new birth, what had seemed impossible began to be possible.

It is an early Christian first-person account of conversion, and it is short. Notice what he emphasizes: not his own effort, and not the drama of his former life, but the fact that something worked which he had been certain would not.

St. Cyprian of Carthage, summarized from To Donatus. A faithful summary, not a quotation.

VOICES OF THE CHURCH | St. John Paul II on the first form of witness

St. John Paul II wrote that the witness of a Christian life is the first and irreplaceable form of mission, and that the modern world listens to a life before it listens to an argument.

Note the word irreplaceable. Not sufficient, which he says elsewhere, and not optional either. Your testimony is not a substitute for content, and no amount of content substitutes for it.

St. John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio 42 (1990).

LIVE IT THIS WEEK

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This week. A story that has never been said out loud to anyone who was not in this room is still a draft.

- Say it to one person outside this group this week. Not as an announcement; when the conversation makes room for it.
- Say it under three minutes. Time yourself beforehand if you have to.
- Do not add anything to the end. For this week, no invitation, no question, no verse. That is a training constraint and not a rule: Paul himself asks Agrippa a direct question at Acts 26:27. The constraint exists so you learn to let a silence be someone else's.
- Afterward, write down which sentence you wanted to add and did not. That sentence is usually the one that is about you.
- Rewrite it once more in a month. It will have changed, and it should.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY

"Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for me."

Psalm 66:16

GOING FURTHER

Read Galatians 1:11-24.

CATECHISM REFERENCES

- **CCC 905.** Lay people proclaim Christ by the testimony of life and by the spoken word.
- **CCC 2471.** Christ came to bear witness to the truth, and the Christian is not to be ashamed of testifying to the Lord.
- **CCC 2472.** Bearing witness in words and deeds is a transmission of the faith.
- **CCC 425.** The transmission of the faith consists primarily in proclaiming Jesus Christ.