

telling our story

stories of unfinished evangelism

AIM

A series of unfinished and open-ended stories about evangelism to help us think about how our story and God's story work together.

INTRODUCTION

... but I've had sort-of unfinished encounters which you couldn't call "evangelism", but they still feel important.

Consider the stories here: either read them as a group or individually. How do you respond? Can you see God at work in these stories, if so how? Do these stories remind you of other experiences you have had?

Let me tell you (1) Unforgettable.

My son and I were driving home over Archway Bridge. My son, who was twelve then, said suddenly "That man's crying, mum!" So I parked the car further on and we walked back and this guy is just sitting on a bench by the bridge. It's a horrible drop; people jump off there sometimes. And he had a teddy bear and some other toys in a plastic bag.

And so I say "You ok, mate?" And he just begins to cry harder than ever. And over the next two hours we hear about his failed business and his drink problem and his childhood. And as he begins to feel better, he asks what I do. And I say, "I'm training to be a minister in the Church." And he says, "You believe in that stuff do you?" And I say, "Yes, utterly."

And when he's ready to ring his wife and after she turns up, he says to me and my son, "How did you notice me?" And I say "My son notices everything. He saw you crying, so we stopped".

So then he shakes my son's hand and then mine and says "I'll never forget you as long as I live". And that was all. We went home.

Note: this story is on page 44/45 of the booklet 'Exploring Evangelism' and is included here for those who don't have the booklet or who want to reproduce it in a different way.

Let me tell you (2) Helpfulness

When I was much younger, only nineteen, Dad suddenly moved to America and left us. And he and I used to talk on the phone once a week. But it was really hard to do - because it was such an awful distance, suddenly. And I missed him and my mum was in bits and he really didn't get what he'd done to the family....

In those days, to ring the States, you had to go through an operator.

I asked for Dad's number - and the operator must have heard something wrong in my voice, I suppose, (though how did he know?), and asked if I was ok and I didn't want to cry, so I couldn't speak.

And he said, "Listen honey, whatever trouble you're in, God loves you, ok? I'm putting you through now, but remember that." And I did. For thirty five years now. Because you don't forget kindness like that, do you?

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Let me tell you (3) Unhelpfulness

When I was at college I had a long way to travel home each night and I was waiting on the platform for the last train. It was deep winter,

January I think, and it was awesomely cold. And I had bronchitis and felt like death - warmed-up, coughing away, really bad.

And there was only one guy on the platform and he was standing just a bit too near, since we had the entire station to ourselves, and looking over at me.

I even thought, should I leave the station? But there wasn't anyone I could have stayed with if the last train went.

And then he came up to me and said "I've been listening to you cough.

Such a terrible sound; it puts me in mind of Our Lord hanging on the cross".

Truly. Can you believe it? That's what he said! That was his opening gambit.

That has to be the worst ever attempt at evangelising in the history of the world. I believe in God too, very much. But the whole thing was just so inappropriate on so many levels that I'm afraid I told him where to go.

Prayer

God of all of your people, (both those who think they know you and those who do not);

We are living in a moment from the middle of your story.

We are neither its author, nor its narrator; we are part of the action.

We can ask to know what the story means; we can hope to understand it all; but we'll never know the half of it.

We are like one season's leaves from a sapling oak: we cannot see the final Glory of the growing story which reaches beyond us in years, strength, size and majesty.

So, Lord, we did not start this story, but we love it.

We will not end this story, but we care how it will end.

We know that if we live truly within your story that we make it better and that if we turn away from it, we make it sadder.

Let us tell your story - and our part in it - truly.

Let us tell it wherever we go, to whoever we meet, wherever and whatever they are.

For no-one belongs or exists outside of your story; and, whether we yet see it, we all have an equal part.

Amen

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EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

1. What was the most helpful thing?
2. What was the least helpful thing?
3. What would you like to try now?

THE NEXT STEP

If you want more material on telling our story please revisit the website

Acknowledgements

These true stories and this prayer are from Lucy Berry who has given permission for them to be used by Vision4Life.

HOW TO FEEDBACK TO VISION4LIFE?

If you wish to offer any feedback – brickbats and bouquets are equally welcome! – you can do so in various ways.

You can email the Vision4Life steering group and the coordinator about general issues via the website or at admin@vision4life.org.uk

Website issues can be dealt with through web@vision4life.org.uk

If you want to make contributions or ask questions about V4L years you can email:
Year 3 – Transformed for Evangelism: evangelism@vision4life.org.uk