

## A Powerful Way to “Tell the Story” in Worship

# Faith Sharing

**Greg Eyer**

### **WANTED**

#### **“GOD SIGHTINGS”**

We are always interested and excited to hear the stories of what God has done in your life.

Has God called you to a ministry?

Have you grown in your faith?

Would you be willing to share your faith story?

Please email or write your stories for consideration as future newsletter/bulletin features or sermon illustrations. Please send to \_\_\_\_\_

Call \_\_\_\_\_  
if you would like more information!

Many people long for spiritual formation in their lives; they are looking for someone who can authentically share a practical story of faith with them. Unfortunately, many times a pastor/worship leader is perceived as a “professional” at faith sharing and may appear to the listener to be less than authentic. We can find that people want to hear other people, the “foot soldiers,” tell their faith stories and describe their spiritual journeys.

Church leaders can enhance the worship experience by encouraging more faith sharing from worship attendees and from other Christians in the community – and not just from the professional worship leaders. This approach will make worship more interactive and experiential for not only the listening worship attendee but for the faith sharer as well. When you include a time of faith sharing in your order of worship, the unchurched and unmotivated followers become your target audience.

#### **How to Find Faith Sharers in Your Midst**

You may want to place this “want ad” in your church’s bulletin and newsletter as a means of finding people to be a part of the faith sharing in your worship celebration and written communications:

Also, you may want to look for potential faith sharers in your small groups. It is very likely that the small-group setting is the first place the faith sharers will put this practice into action by telling their story to others. Keep a list of the names on file of the people who have offered to share their story and under their name a list of the topics they have offered to address. From this list you can determine the appropriate time to have them speak by connecting their story with a related message. You may want to explore the possibility of having your faith-sharing time involve one speaker sometimes and two or more speakers at other times. Possible options involving more than one person would be a one-to-one interview or a panel discussion made up of several people who have the same or similar experiences. At some churches the multimedia team videotapes the faith sharer's presentation to be shown at a later date.

### **Faith Sharing Is Like Storytelling**

Storytelling is perhaps the oldest form of entertainment in existence. Before the advent of print and electronic media, it used to be the only way that customs, traditions, and mores were passed from generation to generation.

Storytelling is like being on a backstage set. It is low tech, high touch. This is why "backstage" music series (in which major artists, sitting on empty sets surrounded by stage equipment and a small audience, play stripped-down versions of their songs) have become so popular on TV. Faith sharing is a form of storytelling that effectively communicates the reality of God to this postmodern generation. In fact, in this age of relativity, some may believe in the value of a person's story as the only absolute. Everyone's story is worth listening to and learning from.

"Tell me the stories of Jesus...What can he do for me?" The postmodern worship attendees, especially if they have been unchurched, will be looking for reasons to turn to Jesus. In a postmodern world where there are no final secular answers, we through our faith sharing can tell others that Jesus is the final answer. We need stories to help us connect to each other, and connecting is done by speech and listening.

The concept of faith sharing works much like "Show and Tell" in the ele-

<b>Message/ Sermon Topic</b>	<b>Faith-Sharing Topic</b>
<b>1. Stress</b>	<b>Recovery from drug and alcohol addiction</b>
<b>2. Discipline</b>	<b>Recovery from overeating</b>
<b>3. Trusting God</b>	<b>Grief Work in the death of a loved one</b>
<b>4. Stewardship</b>	<b>Overcoming financial problems</b>
<b>5. Evangelism</b>	<b>Prayer for unchurched loved ones</b>

mentary school classroom. The presenter (a worship attendee) shares and communicates information about something important to him or her. People in the classroom (the worshipping body) assimilate the information that has been passed on to them by their peer and may, if they choose, apply this information to their own lives. The teacher (the worship leader) plays a low-key role, staying in the background, but offering support to each student during his or her presentation.

Would it not be great to have worship attendees sharing with one another how study, prayer, and mission have changed and transformed their lives? The believer's story may carry more weight than the pastor's illustrations, and a well-known personality's story may be outdone by authentic testimony from an unknown.

### **How to Share Your Faith Story with Others**

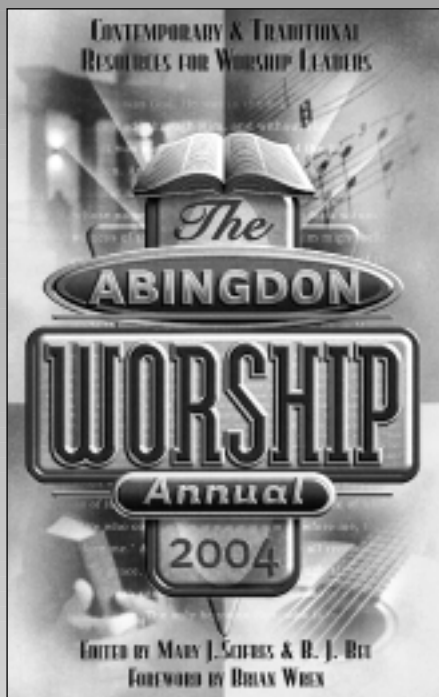
Here are some simple instructions you may want to use with potential "faith sharers."

1. Make it interesting. No one, no matter how gracious, enjoys being bored. It's a contradiction to talk in an uninteresting way about how exciting Jesus really is. Work on your wording, your flow of thought, your key terms.
2. Organize the story to be understood. Think of your story in three phases

and construct it accordingly: (a) when you felt the loneliness, lack of peace, absence of love, unrest, and fears; (b) the decision that revolutionized your life; and (c) the change, the difference Jesus has made in your life. Ask yourself, Can I clearly communicate my idea to the person on the street or in the supermarket?

3. Be specific: Make the moment of change and transformation clear. Take extreme care here, and don't be at all vague regarding what Jesus has done in your life. Speak of Jesus and refer to the decisions you have made with Jesus' guidance. Be simple and direct, emphasizing faith more than head knowledge.
4. Be practical so your story can apply to others. Be honest and authentic and as you are speaking, try to think of the point of view of persons who do not know Jesus. You may be speaking to such a person. Refuse to pick theological lint. Theoretical information doesn't attract attention as much as practical reality. Start with a topic that matters to unbelievers when you are talking to them. Faith sharing must be human; therefore, your effort has to be of human interest.
5. Be warm and genuine. You want your story to produce results. A smile breaks down more barriers than the hammer blow of cold hard facts. Be

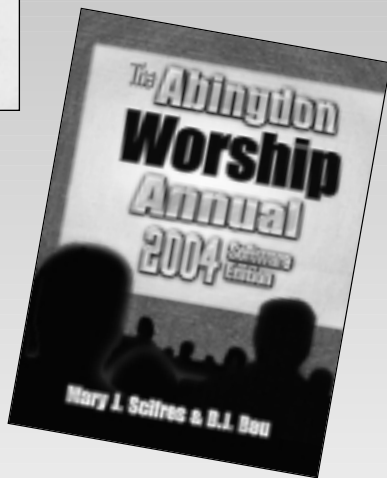
# Announcing Worship Words for 2004



## NEW! The Abingdon Worship Annual: 2004 Edition,

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friendly and sincere by letting your enthusiasm flow freely. It's hard to convince another person of the sheer joy and excitement of knowing Jesus if you're wearing a jail-warden face. Above all be positive and courteous, keeping in mind that most of your communication will come through body language.

6. Now, think of three specific and important changes Jesus has accomplished in your life. If you know your story needs some written work and planning, schedule a time for it now and write it on your calendar.

In the worship experience the faith sharer will perhaps be more persuasive than the preacher or teacher and his or her talk, the musicians and their music, the thespians and their drama, the artists and their artwork, The faith sharer may well be the first person the worship attendee connects with and feels is authentic, because the faith sharer has been there and done that too! □

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*I have a higher demand upon you who love as well as fear God. He whom you fear, whom you love, has qualified you for promoting his work in a more excellent way. Because you love God, you love your brother also: You love, not only your friends, but your enemies: not only the friends, but even the enemies, of God.*

John Wesley, Sermon 52,  
The Reformation of Manners