How to tell your story?

Questions:

1. Read Acts 26:19-24. Why did Festus say Paul was out of his mind? In what ways people may think your story is so extraordinary?

2. Read Acts 26:25-26. Why was Paul so sure about his story being true? Why was Paul’s supernatural experience and dramatic change “reasonable”? How does your extraordinary story make sense in light of an almighty good and faithful God?

3. Read Acts 26:27-32. Your story naturally invites a decision from the listener. Where did Paul start his invitation to King Agrippa? What is a good question for you to invite your audience to think after hearing your story?

=== sermon notes ===

(slide 1) Your story is extraordinary

Acts 26: 24 At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. “You are out of your mind, Paul!”

(slide 2)

* Paul gave up his hard-earned reputation
* Paul insisted that the resurrected Jesus appeared to him
* Paul was concerned about proclaiming Jesus more than his own freedom
* Paul had joy in chains
* Paul cared about both Jews and Gentiles, the rich and the poor

1. How about your story?

(slide 3) Your story is true and reasonable

Acts 26: 25 “I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable.

(slide 4)

* The story is true because it is based on historical events
* God is sometimes above reason but never contrary to reason
* Current belief can be lead by truth and reason to believing the gospel

1. Above reason-
   1. things supernatural- God intervene
   2. things out of ordinary- God loves
2. Contrary to reason-
   1. God is just and unfaithful at the same time

(slide 5) Your story calls for a decision

Acts 26: 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.” 28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?”

(slide 6)

* “Come, and you will see.”
* “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”
* “Come, follow me”

Paul put it this way: the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Festus recently came from Rome, and perhaps didn’t know much of what had happened with Jesus and the early Christian movement. Yet King Agrippa did know, and Paul appealed to his knowledge of the open, historical events that were the foundation for Christian faith – things that were not done in a corner.

i. Paul’s message was characterized by truth and reason, because it was based on historical events (such as the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus), things which were not done in a corner, but open to examination.

ii. The historical foundation of Paul’s message made it true. As for reason, it simply isn’t reasonable to ignore or deny things that actually happen. Who Jesus is and what He did must be accounted for.

i. Paul didn’t first ask Agrippa if he believed on Jesus; he asked, “Do you believe the prophets?” Paul did this because he knew that if Agrippa did believe the prophets, truth and reason would lead him to believe upon Jesus. He wanted to connect what Agrippa already believed to what he should believe.

ii. With this, Paul brought the challenge and a point of decision directly to Agrippa. This is a good and often necessary part of the presentation of the message of who Jesus is and what He did for us – calling the listener to decision.

The gospel should be the scandal, not the immorality or irrationality or gullibility or meanness of the church. - Moore

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Acts 26:1 Then Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.”

So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: 2 “King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, 3 and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

4 “The Jewish people all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. 5 They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that I conformed to the strictest sect of our religion, living as a Pharisee. 6 And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our ancestors that I am on trial today. 7 This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. King Agrippa, it is because of this hope that these Jews are accusing me. 8 Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

9 “I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the Lord’s people in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. 11 Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. I was so obsessed with persecuting them that I even hunted them down in foreign cities.

12 “On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. 13 About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. 14 We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic,[a] ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’

15 “Then I asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’

“ ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,’ the Lord replied. 16 ‘Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. 17 I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

19 “So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. 20 First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds. 21 That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. 22 But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen— 23 that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles.”

24 At this point Festus interrupted Paul’s defense. “You are out of your mind, Paul!” he shouted. “Your great learning is driving you insane.”

25 “I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable. 26 The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do.”

28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, “Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?”

29 Paul replied, “Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains.”

30 The king rose, and with him the governor and Bernice and those sitting with them. 31 After they left the room, they began saying to one another, “This man is not doing anything that deserves death or imprisonment.”

32 Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.”