

How To Develop and Use Your Personal Testimony

- For many people the hardest part of evangelism is building a bridge so that we can share the gospel in an un-offensive way. One of the easiest ways to do so is by sharing your testimony.
- Sharing a testimony is nothing new. People have been doing it since Jesus began changing lives: The demon-possessed man (Mark 5:19-20), The Samaritan women (John 4:39), The blind man (John 9:26), The apostle Paul (Acts 22:3-21; 26:4-23).
- Every believer who has been saved has a testimony – a salvation story. If you don't have an experience to tell you are not an evangelist, you are an evangelistic field. Every testimony is valid because there is someone out there like you who needs to hear your story.
- Even if you were raised in the church and never went out and tasted the things of this world you still have a testimony. Here is your story without even knowing:
 - ✓ You were in rebellion against God because of your sin.
 - ✓ You heard the gospel.
 - ✓ You believed in Jesus and turned from sin.
 - ✓ He forgave you of all your sins and gave you a peace and purpose in life.
 - ✓ Now, instead of going to hell, you are going to heaven.

Sharing your story is the essence of witnessing. In a courtroom, a witness isn't expected to argue the case, prove the truth, or press for a verdict that is the job of the attorneys. Witnesses just tell what happened to them. Jesus said: "You shall be my witnesses." He did not say, "you must be my attorney." He wants you to tell your story to others. It is one of the most effective tools in your evangelistic toolbox.

Benefits of Sharing Your Testimony

1. Sharing your salvation story builds a relationship bridge of understanding that Jesus can walk across into the heart of the lost person.
2. Sharing your testimony is a convenient and effective way to bypass intellectual defenses. It is difficult to argue with the evidence of a changed life.
3. Sharing your story often holds the hearer's interest longer than if you were quoting the words of great theologians. People will listen to you because instead of being a professional salesman, you are a satisfied customer.
4. Sharing your story can be given in any time span you are given from minutes to an hour. It is easier to relate to than principles; captures the attention and people remember them longer.

5. Sharing your story is not reserved for the highly educated or spiritually mature. It can be done by a newly saved believer.
6. Sharing your story makes evangelism personal and relational. Many people who won't accept the Bible will listen to your story with a natural curiosity about experiences they never had.
7. Sharing your story is an essential part of your mission on earth and is more authentic and effective than a sermon. That's why on six different occasions Paul used his testimony to share the gospel instead of quoting Scripture (Acts 22-26).

Reasons for Sharing Your Testimony

- DA, 347: "We are to acknowledge His grace as made known through holy men of old, but ***that which will be effectual is the testimony of experience.***"
- DA, 347: "God desires that our praise shall ascend to Him marked by our own individuality. These precious acknowledgments to the glory of His grace, while supported by a Christ like life, ***have an irresistible power that works for the salvation of souls.***"
- COL, 125: "Those who have put on Christ will relate their experience, tracing step by step the leading of the Holy Spirit. ***It is unnatural for any to keep these things secret, and those who are filled with the love of Christ will not do so.***"
- COL, 232: "Thousands can be reached in the most simple and humble way. The true, honest expression of a son or daughter of God, spoken in natural simplicity, ***has power to unbolt the door to hearts that have been closed against Christ and His love.***
- DA, 340: "We can bear witness to what we have known of the grace of Christ. This is the witness for which the Lord calls, ***and for the want of which the world is perishing.***"
- DA, 340: "The two restored demoniacs were the first missionaries who Christ sent to preach the gospel in the region of Decapolis. They could not instruct the people, as the disciples who had been daily with Christ were able to do.

But they could tell what they themselves had seen, and heard and felt of the power of Christ. This is what everyone can do whose heart has been touched by the grace of God."
- 6t, 67: "Talk about Christ ***in your own experience*** and what will happen... Christ crucified ... talk it, pray it, sing it and it will break and win hearts."

How To Prepare Your Testimony

The Bible says, be ready at all times to answer anyone who ask you to explain the hope you have in you, but do it with gentleness and respect. (1 Peter 3:15 TEV). The best to “be ready” is to plan a personal worded three-minute testimony. God will be parathion and careful organization.

- Use a Testimony Worksheet, which should include the following four points. Study the testimony of Paul. *Acts 22; Philippians 3*
 - a. What was I before I became a Christian?
 - b. How I became a Christian.
 - c. What becoming a Christian has meant to me.
 - d. You may wish to close with a favorite text.

- In preparing your testimony . . .
 - a. Ask God for wisdom and success. (James 1:5, 6)
 - b. Emphasize points 2 and 3 on your worksheet.
 - c. Use specifics, be careful of generalities.
 - d. Weed out sharp or derogatory references to other denominations.
 - e. Be graphic and descriptive as possible.
 - f. Avoid clichés such as: “the truth”, “the message”.
 - g. Be positive, not negative.
 - h. Do not include Spirit of Prophecy reference.
 - i. Memorize your testimony and practice it until it becomes natural.

- Sharing your testimony . . .
 - a. Share with genuineness, warmth and enthusiasm.
 - b. Smile! Ask the Lord to give you a happy, radiant countenance.
 - c. Tune in on your prospect’s needs and identify with his problems.
 - d. Select truthful statements about yourself that will enable your prospect to see himself in your life.
 - e. You may not know when you are converted, but you know that you are converted.
 - f. You must be confident in your eternal life at this moment.
 - g. Remember, you are sharing a testimony and not a “preachimony”.

- Be specific about the blessings of being a Christian. Make your testimony concrete.
 - a. “It is good to know that if I should not wake up in the morning, I will wakeup to meet God one day to live forever with Him.”

- b. "I think most of us want to live forever and I am so glad to have arrangements made to live forever."
- c. "My daughter and granddaughter are in Africa. There is trouble there and I am thankful to know that one day we can be together forever."

Points To Ponder

- Don't exaggerate your past. Accuracy is important but so is truthfulness. Some people's testimony becomes more charismatic with the passing of time. They think that if it is charismatic it is more appealing, but if it is not truthful it is counterproductive for it stifles the work of the Holy Spirit.
- Remember that you are not the star of your story. Jesus is the star. Spend less time talking about what you did and more time talking about what He has done for you. The story is the bridge not the destination. The point of sharing your testimony is so that you can tell His story.
- Be careful that the witness of your life does not contradict the witness of your lips. The need for authenticity and credibility cannot be overstated for "actions speak louder than words. We witness with our lives long before we witness with our lips.
- Saint Frances of Assisi used to say, "Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary use words." This is not to suggest that words are unnecessary but that our conduct and character contribute significantly to our effectiveness as witnesses. If what people observe in our lives contradict what they hear from our lips, our presentation, our story becomes distorted.
- In addition to your conversion testimony you may develop additional testimonies concerning how God has been at work in your life. Those may include testimonies about: answered prayer, healing, victory, success, diet, marriage, employment, tithing, Sabbath-keeping and God's power, faithfulness, providence and deliverance.
- The only failure in witnessing is the failure to witness. To ensure that you do not miss opportunities to witness it is essential to pray this daily prayer: "God give me today (1) an opportunity to speak to someone about Jesus, (2) the wisdom to see it." Talking with God daily about your witness helps to overcome the fear of witnessing.

Personal Testimony Worksheet

1. My life before I accepted Christ:

- Tell about your life before you came to Christ.
- Use adjectives to describe your life: empty; confused; broken; knew something was missing; searching for something more.
- Tell of activities that filled your life: trying to climb the ladder of success, being an alcoholic or workaholic or drug addict, reared in a Christian home and worked in the church without knowing Christ.

2. How I became a Christian:

- Tell how it happened
- Describe the events, crisis, or circumstances surrounding your conversion.
- What caused you to realize you needed Jesus?
- How you committed your life to Christ

3. My life since becoming a Christian: (Tell of changes, joy and blessings. Give praise to God for His kindness to you personally.)

- Tell of the difference Jesus has made in your life.
- Describe the changes, joy and blessings.
- Give praise to God for your salvation.
- What becoming a Christian has meant to you.

4. My favorite Scripture passage: (favorite verse with which I might close).