

Testimony, How To Prepare

Introduction: There is only one Gospel, but there is no one method of evangelism. There are many different tools that can be used in presenting the Gospel. Image your goal is to cook dinner. There are many different cooking tools you could use to get the job done: an oven, a stove, a microwave, a spatula, a big spoon, a measuring cup, a tea spoon, a frying pan, a one-quart pot, an egg beater, a blender, a strainer, etc. It is the same with evangelism: open-air preaching, one-one one conversations, written tracts, the radio, television, the Romans road, the internet, bill boards, etc. In this workshop, we will focus on only one of these tools: your testimony; telling the story of how you came to Christ. I often use the testimony approach when I want to ease into a Gospel conversation. A testimony gently presents the Gospel in the context of a real-life story, and it often opens the door to a more in-depth conversation about spiritual things.

Why Not Just Wing It?

It's your story, you know it already, so why should you take the time to prepare it? When sharing your testimony, you can get nervous, ramble on too long, become side-tracked or forget things, and be confusing or distracting for those listening. This is why a little preparation and practice can be so valuable.

ESV 1 Peter 3:15-16a . . . in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect . . .

In the Bible, God used the most those who were the most prepared.

Daniel Montgomery: "Every testimony is a tribute to God's power. It's only by God's power that we step out of death into life, that we are transferred out of darkness into the kingdom of light, with God's son Jesus Christ. We need to pray for the wisdom to communicate that."¹

God Wants You

When it comes to people getting saved, God not only predestined the *end* (salvation), but He also predestined the *means* (us telling other people about Jesus). God has graciously chosen to include us in the process of bringing other people to eternal Life (Jesus).

ESV Romans 10:13-15 . . . "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

ESV 2 Corinthians 5:20 . . . we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

¹ Bobby Giles, "How To Write A Testimony", MySongInTheNight.com. Accessed August 6, 2019.

Evangelism is something God wants us to be involved with, and it is important.

You Are Not In This Alone

You are not in this alone. God has promised to be with us in a very special way when we talk to others about Jesus:

ESV **Matthew 28:18-20** . . . Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . . And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

ESV **Acts 1:8** [Jesus speaking] . . . you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses . . .

Prayer Is Important!

ESV **Matthew 9:37-38** Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

When was the last time you prayed that? (Be careful; you might be the answer to your own prayer!).

It has been said that if you go without praying, you are a fool; but if you pray without going, you are a hypocrite!

ESV **Colossians 4:3-4** . . . pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ . . . that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

Based on Colossians 4:3-4, as it relates to evangelism, how should you pray for other Christians?

Love is Paramount

When it comes to evangelism, there is no place for pride, ego or competition. It is quite possible to win the argument but lose the soul. Your over-riding motivation must be love—love for Jesus and love for people. Don't be like Jonah, who had no love for the Assyrians and didn't want to see them saved. God worked despite Johan, but it is better if we work with God.

ESV **1 Corinthians 13:1-3** If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Example: It's been said if you try to pry an old dry bone out of a dog's mouth, he'll bite you; but if you lay a nice juicy stake in front of him, he'll drop that old bone.

You Can Do It!

Your testimony is the story of how you came to be a Christian. You are already an expert on this topic. The aim is to give honor to God as we present the Gospel through the vehicle of our testimony. Ultimately, your story is His story.

ESV 2 Timothy 1:7-8 . . . God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord . . .

Class Handouts

Home Work: Don't hand out the two workshop pages (below) until *after* you have verbally gone over the material on the first of the two pages. Reassure them that it is not necessary to take notes at this point. After talking through how to write one's testimony (below), hand out the two worksheet pages with instructions to fill it out at home and return to the next session prepared to give one's testimony. The class will lovingly help each person refine his presentation. If the class is large, spit it up in smaller groups, each with a trained facilitator. Meet for as many sessions as is necessary. Ideally, arrange for class members to later give their testimonies in various church gatherings (but not all at once!).

Teacher's Notes: Special Considerations²

Early childhood conversion: Those saved at an early age may not have much to say about the "before Christ" portion of their life. What a wonderful blessing it is to have Christian parents! One of God's greatest means of grace is to have His elect born into Christian household. People in this category may want to make their testimony more one of general thankfulness for God having saved them and given them early in life a realization of their need for reconciliation to God and His provision through Christ and His death and resurrection.

In the below passage, note how disobedient to parents is in the same list with murder and hating God. Childhood sins are serious!

ESV Romans 1:29-31 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Can't remember a date: Some people who are genuinely saved cannot remember a specific date or set of circumstances associated with their salvation. However, no one is saved without coming to a realization of conviction of sin, a turning to God for the solution and a conscious, cognitive decision to receive Christ. Don't mislead people into thinking that salvation is something vague that they may have experienced but don't remember. Many who grow up close to the things of the Lord miss heaven by 18", the distance between head and heart. The key is who a person is actively trusting for salvation at the present (no matter when it happened in the past).

² "Preparing Your Personal Salvation Testimony", RestonBible.org. Accessed August 6, 2019.

How To Do It³

Helpful Hints

- Pray before you write out and share your story.
- Write the way you speak.
- Be honest, but don't be overly negative or positive (don't exaggerate).
- Don't criticize or name any church, denomination, organization, etc.
- Think about your listener. It's not about you, really, it is about helping him understand the Gospel. Avoid overly-religious terms (sanctified, justified, redeemed, propitiation, incarnation, etc.)
- Keep it short. Aim to tell your story in three to five minutes.
- Practice telling your story until it becomes natural.
- Be sure to work the Gospel message into your account.

Your testimony can be organized into three steps: **1) Before Christ, 2) how you came to Christ, and 3) after Christ.** Such a simple outline is clear, and it works.

1) Your Life Before Christ. Paint a picture of what your life was like before you came to Christ. Don't dwell too much on, or brag about, past sin struggles. Share only the details that relate to your theme—just enough to show your need for Christ.

- a) What about my life before Christ will relate most to the non-Christians I know? (Even though this is your story, it is not really about you. It is about helping others to understand and relate to Jesus).
- b) What did my life revolve around (e.g. relationships, your reputation, or money)? Where did I get my security, identity or happiness from? Where you a teen-aged werewolf?
- c) How did those things begin to let me down?
- d) What obstacles were you facing? How did you feel whenever you were alone with your thoughts? Why did you need to change?

2) How You Came to Christ. Give the details about why and how you became a Christian. Communicate in such a way that the person you are talking with can understand how he too can become a Christian, too. Even if your listener is not ready for that, God could use your story and explanation of the Gospel to draw him to Himself in the future.

- a) When was the first time I heard the Gospel? What were my initial reactions?
- b) When and why did my perspective begin to change toward Christ?
- c) What were the final struggles that went through my mind just before I accepted Him? Why did I finally decide to accept Christ (or give Him complete control of my life)?

3) Your Life After Coming to Christ. Share some of the changes that Christ has made in your life as they relate to your theme. Emphasize the changes in your character, attitude or perspective, not just mere changes in behavior. Be realistic. We still struggle as Christians. Life is far from perfect, but what's different about your life now?

³ "Preparing Your Personal Testimony", Cur.org. Accessed August 07, 2019.

- a) How is my life different now? List some specific changes in your character, attitude and perspective on life.
- b) What motivates me now? What do I live for?
- c) Even though my life still isn't perfect, how does knowing Christ help me deal with that fact?⁴

ESV **Revelation 12:11** And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony . . .

Example: You, the teacher, give your own testimony as an example. If time permits ask others present who are already prepared to give their testimonies also. If you have brought pens, let the students begin to fill out the worksheet in class.

TESTIMONY WORKSHEET

BEFORE I KNEW CHRIST, I LIVED AND THOUGHT THIS WAY...

HOW I RECEIVED CHRIST...

AFTER I RECEIVED CHRIST, THESE CHANGES TOOK PLACE...

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NTRF.org
Revised 08/09/2019

⁴ "Your Story is God's Story: Creating Your Testimony", Cru.org. Accessed August 6, 2019.

Handout: How To Write Your Testimony

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