**Understanding Your Personal Testimony**

*Sharing how you came to know Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord is an invaluable tool. Your personal testimony can be spoken anywhere at any time, and presents the gospel in a clear and personal manner.*

**A PATTERN FROM PAUL** **(see 1 Timothy 1:12-17)**

*These are the three main points of a testimony with suggestions on what you might talk about on how you came to know the Savior.*

1. **Life BEFORE I met Christ (v. 13a)**
   * What were your attitudes, needs, problems?
   * What did your life revolve around? What was most important to you?
   * How did you look for security, peace of mind, happiness? How did you find your activities unsatisfying?
   * Who were you before Jesus saved you?
   * What were you doing? (particularly, what sin were you living in, pursuing, etc)
   * How were you living?
   * What or who were you looking to for identity? Approval? Acceptance? Value? Comfort? Happiness? What were you angry about? Bragging about? Sacrificing for? Complaining most about? What was your version of hell, and what were you looking to to save you from that?
   * How did you view God? Harsh? Distant? Punisher? Uncaring? Non-existent?
   * How did you view yourself? Good? Better than most? Dirty? Unlovable? Used?
   * How did you feel (guilty/shameful/rejected/hopeless/despairing)?
   * Were you performing (trying to earn approval) or rebelling (not caring about the consequences of your choices)? (Luke 15)

*NOTE: when we share our testimony, it’s important that we identify the things we worshiped. The Bible calls this idolatry, which is sin. When we don’t identify our sin we tend to minimize it. Admitting that our sin is great simply means that our Savior is greater, his grace deeper, his love wider. So, appropriately detailing the sin of our past is helpful to give context to the grace of Jesus. Religion is about sin-avoidance. The gospel is about sin-repentance.*

1. **HOW I met Christ (vv. 13b-15)**

* When did you first hear the Gospel? (Be specific – to allow people to relate)
* Speak of the eternal forgiveness that you found in Christ.
  + A realization of guilt and condemnation
  + Discovery that I was unable to pay for my own sin
  + Christ’s death on the cross is the only adequate payment for sin
  + Christ’s resurrection is my hope that we can be freed from sin
  + Admit one’s guilt to God and turned to Christ, trusting Him to forgive and cleanse
* How has he taken your shame? (Colossians 2:13-15)
* How has he taken your guilt?
* What has he given you in Christ? (Righteousness? Acceptance? Forgiveness?)
* What has the Father done for you because of Jesus?
* How does the Father view you now? (Romans 8:1-39; Galatians 4:1-7)
* Where did you first hear this and understand this? How did you come to believe it to be true? What events or people were key in your life to bring you to believing the gospel?
* When did you first repent of your sins and trust in Jesus?

1. **Life SINCE I met Christ (vv. 16-17)**
   * What changes did you see in your life, actions, attitudes, or problems? (Be specific)
   * How long did it take before you notice changes?
   * Briefly state the role of prayer and the Bible in your life.
   * How do you feel now that you are accepted into God’s family?
   * How do you feel now that God has forgiven you?
   * How do you feel now that God has taken away your shame?
   * What do you want to do now?
   * Conclusion: What does Jesus mean to you now?

**Question: What if I grew up going to church? How do I apply this pattern?**

* First: praise God! Every story is different, and every story matters. The greatness of our salvation is based on a great God not necessarily a gory story.
* Second, here are some additional resources to consult as you think about how to share your story even if it doesn’t fit a clear “before” and “after.”

[https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/your-boring-salvation-testimony](https://erlc.com/resource-library/articles/your-boring-salvation-testimony" \t "_blank)

[https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/if-you-dont-have-a-dramatic-testimony](https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/if-you-dont-have-a-dramatic-testimony" \t "_blank)

[https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/december/how-i-know-my-testimony-is-real.html](https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2014/december/how-i-know-my-testimony-is-real.html" \t "_blank)

<https://susiedavis.org/6-questions-to-help-you-share-your-god-story/>

**Preparing Your Personal Testimony**

*Writing out how you came to trust Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord will clarify the details in your mind and will aid you in presenting your testimony to others. Using the above three-point pattern, write out your testimony.*

**DO!!**

1. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom and guidance as you write (James 1:5, 6)
2. Write in such a way that others will feel associated with you in past and present experiences.
3. Keep it clear, concise, interesting and to the point.
4. Use at leas one, possibly two Scriptures.
5. If you trusted Christ as a child, emphasize your growth (Point 3 from above)

**DON’T!!**

1. Avoid the use of Christian jargon. Non-believers, often misunderstand words such as “sanctified,” “converted,” and “born again,” unless they are explained.
2. Do not be to wordy, beat around the bush, or emphasize how bad you used to be.
3. Do not be too long. Keep it short (3-5 minutes)
4. Refrain from mentioning church denominations, especially in a derogatory way.

**PRESENTING YOUR TESTIMONY**

1. Share with loving enthusiasm in the power of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18).
2. Speak loudly and clearly in a natural, relaxed tone of voice.
3. Avoid annoying mannerisms when you speak, such as: jingling coins and keys in pockets, swaying nervously, shifting your eyes, clearing you throat, and using the popular sounds of “uh,” “ah,” and “um.”
4. Don’t be afraid to smile.
5. Try to memorize your testimony, and practice it until it comes naturally.