

## ***Six Principles For Sharing Your Testimony***

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Your story is authentically and uniquely you. It's versatile and can be used in a variety of situations - from sharing with an individual to addressing a group. It's not a debate, it's not pushy, it's not fake, and it doesn't feel like religious propaganda, since it's coming from your heart. Very rarely will people argue with you about your story. In fact, they're more likely to engage and ask clarifying questions, which in turn pushes the dialogue about Jesus to a more personal level.

### **Six Simple Principles**

If you've never thought about preparing and communicating your story, that's fine (most Christians haven't). Here are six simple principles to get you started.

#### ***1. Keep it short.***

Communicating too many details about your life can distract listeners from the central point: how you met Christ. Keeping it short can help with that. Three minutes is a good target. Remember that the purpose of telling your story is not about you; it's about God. Clearly and succinctly communicate what he has done in your life. Listeners today have a very low tolerance for long-windedness. Being concise helps keep people engaged.

#### ***2. Have a before, how, and after.***

There should be a pretty clear timeline and logical flow to your story. Talk about what your life was like before Christ, how you met him, and what your life's like now. This timeline is different for everyone, of course, but it brings a sense of structure to what you're saying and helps keep your listener tracking.

For those who've been Christians since childhood, be vulnerable about your struggles as a growing Christian—the "how" may be a time when the gospel really sank in, and you understood it at a deeper level. Everyone's story is unique, and there's flexibility in how to share it, but thinking in terms of a timeline can be very helpful.

#### ***3. Have a theme.***

A theme helps people walk away from your story remembering one main idea. There may be many themes in your story, but try to boil it down to one. Loading your testimony with multiple main points makes your story muddier, not more poignant. It's much more likely to stick with people when there's a single, memorable theme.

#### ***4. Clearly present the gospel.***

You want people to clearly grasp the source of your transformation: Jesus Christ. If people aren't pointed to Christ, they'll be pointed in another direction, which will (of course) ultimately fail them. We want people to come away from our story thinking, "Isn't Jesus amazing? I want him in my life, too." Your testimony should show people that God loves them, they're sinful, Jesus is the payment for the penalty of their sin, and they need to trust Christ as the payment for the penalty of their sins in order to have a personal relationship with God.

Don't be tempted to omit this part of your story - it's the most important element. It's the message that changed everything about you and brought you to where you are now. If you haven't shared the gospel in your testimony, you haven't really shared your testimony.

### **5. Avoid 'Christianese.'**

Avoid Christian slang - those words believers use all the time in everyday Christian circles but make no sense to anyone else. We're trying to be clear about what we're communicating, and we need to understand the importance of speaking a language that can be easily understood. We want anyone and everyone to have intellectual access to what we're saying, so eliminate alienating language (or at least be willing to quickly define it).

### **6. Practice, practice, practice!**

You should know your testimony by heart without having any notecards or outline in front of you. If someone asks about your life at the public swimming pool, you won't be able to whip out a piece of paper for reference - so have your story memorized and ready at a moment's notice. It's a good idea to write it out or make an outline, then practice it aloud on your own or with a friend. Eventually you'll know it by heart.

### ***Your Story as Part of God's Story***

Remind yourself as you prepare that it's not just about how God and the gospel fit into your story, but also about how your story fits into the greater story of the gospel. God will use your testimony to affect those around you if you're faithful to speak up. How he has changed you can change someone else. Isn't that amazing?

Your testimony is significant because it's the personal miracle of how God transformed your heart of stone into a heart of flesh, and only you can uniquely bear witness to that miracle. He has been behind every detail of your life, even using the ugly and terrible things to form and shape you with the utmost care and attention. He is still working on you right now. What a joy to tell others of his miraculous work!

## **Preparing Your Personal Testimony**

A great exercise in preparing your testimony is to write out your story, read it through several times, and edit it. It really helps to identify a theme in your life that reflects God's love, and make sure each part of your story revolves around that theme. Don't get caught up in recounting all the details or specifics. Open ended stories tend to allow people to relate to them better, as well as encourage questions - which you can use to learn about who you are talking to and emphasize what is really hitting home with them.

Use the 5 steps below to begin crafting your testimony- telling God's story through your life. Write a few sentences in the blank spaces, and then read it over a few times, editing as you go. This is just a basic pattern, feel free to let your passion and creativity flow in telling your story. Sit down with someone you trust and practice sharing your story with them, ask for honest feedback.

### ***What was my life like before knowing Christ?***

Relevant stories, people, memories that shaped the way you lived, thought and viewed life  
What things were happening in your life that was shaping who you were and are?  
What was your attitude toward God? (Your view of God)  
Don't glorify sin – how much you could drink, money, popularity, etc...  
Avoid speaking critically or negatively about an individual or group

### ***Realizing your need for a Savior/Redeemer***

Understanding of sin – when did you realize this?  
Lack of satisfaction in the world, "religion", etc...  
Heard Bible teaching about the nature of God, man, Christ, heaven, etc...

***Understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ***

Where and from whom did you hear the good news about Jesus Christ

Why was the gospel good news to you?

This is a great place in your testimony to share the gospel using a verse from the Bible.

(Examples: Romans 6:23, Romans 5:8, Eph. 2:8-9, etc.)

***Your response to the gospel of Jesus Christ***

Not so much date/time, but when did you “repent and believe”

What is your understanding of “repent and believe”?

What happened after you responded to the gospel?

***Your “new life” in Jesus Christ***

How has your life been different?

Why are you telling this person all this?