
Sharing the Gospel – Personal Testimony

“And 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, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’” -Matthew 28:18-20

Go Make Disciples Check-in: In your small groups, practice sharing the five core truths of the gospel from last week (see 1 Corinthians 15:1-7). How did you do...which of the core truths do you still need to continue to memorize?

This week and the next two weeks we will be working on gospel sharing strategies, which are part of the “baptizing” command in the Great Commission. We are called to share the gospel with others, invite them to put their trust in Jesus, and if they do, they will be baptized by the Holy Spirit and become a child of God.

Our first gospel sharing method will be learning how to write our personal testimonies. A personal testimony is the story of how Jesus saved you. In other words, while our testimony’s include the gospel message of what Jesus did on the cross for the sins of humanity, they also add in details of our life before Christ and after we trust in Christ.

- | |
|---|
| <p>1. Have you ever used the gospel-sharing method of personal testimony, and if so, when?</p> |
|---|

Paul gives his personal testimony to King Agrippa in Acts 26. Let’s take time to read that together so we can have an idea of what a one’s testimony should look like. (Read Acts 26:1-27).

Most personal testimonies contain three parts: your life before Christ, how you came to Christ, and your life after Christ (Note: We’ll add a fourth part to this format later in this session). Sharing our lives before Christ can include sharing areas of sin and disobedience in our lives. It could include sharing various idols in our lives such as where we were finding our hope, identity, happiness, or security from. It could include how those idols (other gods) failed us. For those who trusted in Christ at an early age and grew up going to church, this section probably will include acknowledging that you were trying to be a good person and do the right thing, but realizing that you could never be good enough to earn salvation.

The middle section, “How I came to Christ,” should include the details of how you heard the gospel, what the gospel message is, and how you specifically responded to it. While the

temptation in this section will probably be to emphasize our own actions or to turn our evangelist into the hero, Jesus should be the hero of this section. This part of our testimonies should be primarily about what Jesus did for us on the cross. Trevin Wax writes:

“Let us be sure to incorporate our own personal stories within the biblical story of Jesus. Our own testimonies are worth little if they do not include the historical truth claims that form the heart of the Christian faith. If we fail to preach Christ, we are leaving The Self on the throne. We are giving testimony about ourselves, not God.” –Trevin Wax

The final section, “My life after Christ,” is where we talk about how our lives are different now that we have trusted in Jesus. We can refer back to the first section and talk about how believing in Jesus has changed where we find our security, identity, hope, and happiness. We can share how Jesus is helping us overcome sin, even though our lives are still not perfect. Or we can share how God has changed what we are living for (making disciples, loving and serving others, daily worship, etc.). Again, the emphasis should be on how God is continuing to work in you, via His Spirit to make you more like Christ. Make him the hero; not you. 😊

2. Where do these three parts (Life before Christ, how you came to Christ, life after Christ) show up in Paul’s testimony to King Agrippa?

The final part of sharing our personal testimonies should be inviting others to believe in Jesus as well. Paul does this in vv. 27-29. He finishes sharing how his life is different in v. 26 and then asks King Agrippa if he believes? When King Agrippa responds as to whether Paul really thinks that he could persuade King Agrippa to be a Christian, Paul responds by saying that it is his desire the King Agrippa and all his listeners would be a follower of Jesus as He is.

Given our study of the Great Commission to this point, we should understand why this is such an important addition to our personal testimonies. Our intent in sharing our testimonies is that those listening would put their faith in Jesus! We want God to save them just as He has saved us! Therefore, concluding our personal testimonies by extending the invitation for them to believe in Jesus allows the opportunity for them to do just that.

Therefore, in an effort to put this all together, on the following page is a sample format for our personal testimonies, adapted from Cru. Please note, our testimonies do not have to include answers to all of these questions. Rather they serve as a guide to help us consider what to include in each section.

CREATING YOUR TESTIMONY

Part I: My Life Before Christ

1. What about my life before Christ will relate most to the non-Christians I know?
2. What did my life revolve around? Where did I get my security, identity or happiness from?
3. How did those things begin to let me down?
4. What is a key verse that explains my sin or the consequences of sin?

Part II: How I Came to Christ

1. When was the first time I heard the gospel? What were my initial reactions?
2. What is the gospel message (include a key verse or Paul's five core truths from last week)?
3. Why did I finally decide to accept Christ (or give Him complete control of my life)?

Part III: My Life After Coming to Christ

1. How is my life different now? List some specific ways God has changed your character, attitude and perspective on life.
2. What do I live for now?
3. Even though my life still isn't perfect, how does knowing Christ help me overcome my sin?
4. How does knowing you are guaranteed eternal life help you live through suffering and trials in this world?

Part IV: Inviting Others to Believe

1. What words am I going to use to invite others to put their trust in Jesus?

Helpful Hints

- Pray before you write out and share your story. Ask God for wisdom and the words to say.
- Write the way you speak.
- Be honest.
- Aim to keep your story to three to five minutes. At that length, it's easily something you can share in a conversation without it becoming a monologue.
- Practice your testimony out loud several times until you feel comfortable with it.

Two Questions

One of the more frequent questions that we have when creating our personal testimonies is how long should they be? Most teachers, evangelists, pastors, etc. recommend 3-5 minutes. Anything less than three minutes will often omit key aspects of our salvation story. Anything more than five minutes will often drift towards making ourselves the hero, and/or will run the risk of losing the attention of those listening. In addition, limiting our testimony to 3-5 minutes will make it a gospel sharing strategy we can use in situations when we do not have several hours with the individual (riding a bus, on lunch break, getting to know a guest on Sunday morning, etc.).

The second common question surrounding our personal testimonies is, “What if I have a boring testimony?” Many of us know someone, like the apostle Paul, who have an incredible salvation story. They have been rescued from drug addictions, or prison, were a devout atheist, or were about to take their life before God saved them.

Consequently, it is then easy for us to compare salvation stories and see ours as simple or boring, and thus render them ineffective. But let us remember that each our testimonies is God’s chosen redemption story for us. It is how He chose to save us. And the Bible teaches us that each one of our salvation stories is a miracle in and of itself. Each one is a story of God’s grace at work to bring a sinner with no hope into His family through His Son Jesus. Each testimony is a story of crossing over from death to life.

Pastor J.F. Arnold writes: “If we can’t see the beauty of a redemption story, the problem isn’t with the story: the problem is with us.” We may end up using other methods of sharing the gospel, but let’s not avoid our personal testimonies because we believe them to be boring and ineffective. Our salvation stories are miraculous, they are beautiful, and they are worth sharing with others.

Go Make Disciples

Take time this week to write out your personal testimony using the format provided on the previous page. For the reasons given above, keep it between 3-5 minutes. Next week, we will take the beginning part of the session to practice sharing our testimonies with each other, allowing others to give feedback on what we did well and how we can improve them.

Praying This Week

- Thank God for creating our salvation story through Jesus.
- Ask God to forgive us for the times we avoided sharing our salvation story with others.
- Ask the Spirit to help us to write our personal testimony and be ready to share it with others.