

HOW TO PREPARE AND COMMUNICATE YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Purpose: To motivate and equip you to prepare and use your testimony in sharing your faith with others.

Objectives: By the end of this session you will:

1. Be able to give a biblical and practical basis for a personal testimony.
2. Be able to begin to compose your personal testimony using a three-point outline.
3. Be willing to give your testimony.

Key Verse: 1 Peter 3:15

Note to instructor: Share a personal story about a time when you tried to share how you came to Christ and were not very comfortable, nor effective because you didn't know quite what to say.

I. Why a Prepared Personal Testimony

A. It is useful in a wide variety of circumstances.

1. A well-prepared testimony brings flesh and blood reality to every witnessing situation. It provides evidence of God at work in your life (Matthew 5:14-16).
2. It can be used in large groups, small groups and one-on-one situations.
3. It explains through a personal story — your own — what one needs to know to become a Christian.
4. It can be readily expanded or reduced based upon the time available.
5. It is difficult to refute your own experience.

B. We are commanded to be prepared (1 Peter 3:15).

Let's tie the command of 1 Peter to examples that God has given us through Paul's testimonies in Acts.

II. A Biblical Example of a Personal Testimony: Paul (Acts 21:37-22:21).

A. Paul gave us two examples of his testimony in Acts (Acts 22:1-21 & Acts 26:2-22). Please read these passages and note any general elements you see.

The instructor could have one of the students read Acts 22:1-21 aloud. Have someone in the class time it. Ask the class if they noticed 3 sections, and which verses were in each section (before he came to Christ, how he came to Christ, and his life after he came to Christ).

- B. Paul generally divided his testimony into three parts: before he became a Christian, how he became one and what God has done in his life after he became one.
 - 1. Before: A general description of his life before he became a believer (Acts 22:1-5)
 - 2. How: An exact description of how he became a believer (Acts 22:6-16).
 - 3. After: A specific example of how Christ changed his life (Acts 22:17-21).
- C. Prepared testimonies are easy to adapt. Paul adjusted the emphasis of his testimony in relation to the audience addressed. (Compare Acts 22:1-21 and Acts 26:1-23)

Instructor could mention that Acts 22 was to a Jewish audience; Acts 26 was to a non-Jewish audience.

III. How to Prepare Your Personal Testimony.

- A. Follow Paul's three-point outline.
 - 1. Before: What was your life like before you received Jesus Christ?
 - 2. How: How did you come to know or receive Christ?
 - 3. After: What happened after you received Christ?
- B. What if I received Christ at an early age?

Even if you received Christ at an early age, still follow the three-point outline. Just place more emphasis on your life after receiving Christ. If there was a point when you drifted away from God, then mention how you came to Christ, moved away, how you came back to God and what has happened since.

Note to instructor: If you have not yet shared your testimony, do so now. Ask the class to time you and see if they can notice 3 points/sections (before, how, and after).

IV. Action Point.

Now you will have an opportunity to begin to write your own testimony.

- A. Use the Guidelines to compose your testimony.

Note to instructor: Briefly go over the guidelines. Emphasize two or three critical things from each part of the list, but don't go over each of them. Explain why we shoot for three minutes. Don't spend a lot of time here as we want them to begin filling out their testimony worksheet.



- B. With a friend (or training partner) answer the questions and ask them to record the summary notes on your Testimony Worksheet.
- C. Using the guidelines provided, write your testimony from your notes.
- D. Bring these notes with you when having individual time with your mentor.
- E. Rewrite, if necessary, per your mentor's suggestions.
- F. Memorize your testimony and practice your presentation.

Instructor: Mention, but do not go over, the presentation tips. The mentor can do that with them after their testimony is written.

Have them break into pairs at this point and begin to fill out the testimony worksheets. It is recommended that they fill out section one for both people, then section two for both, then section three, rather than one person doing it all, then the next.

Guidelines for Writing Your Testimony

I. What to do.

1. Pray! Ask the Lord to give you wisdom and guidance as you write.
2. Write your testimony with particular friends, individuals and/or groups in mind. It will make it more personable and less formal.
3. Keep a three-minute time limit in mind.
4. Choose one theme from your life and develop it. Don't shotgun the audience.
5. Begin with an attention-getting sentence or incident.
6. Be general in part one. Include interesting, thought-provoking experiences with enough detail to arouse interest. Don't spend a lot of time here. Be specific in part two about how you came to Christ. Give one or two changes Christ made in your life in part three that relate to part one.
7. Use at most one or two Bible verses, but only where they relate directly to your experience. Explain the references if your audience is not familiar with the Bible. (Example: "One of Jesus' disciples said. . ." rather than "1 John 5:11-13 says. . .")
8. Write a closing that provides a strong, finished and logical conclusion.
9. Edit and rewrite as needed.
10. Be realistic. Do not imply that Christ removes all of life's problems, but rather that He enables you to live through them as you walk in obedience.
11. Speak boldly about Jesus (not your past life). He is the main focus of your testimony.

II. What not to do.

1. Do not make statements that reflect negatively on the church, organizations, or people.
2. Avoid mentioning denominations or churches by name.
3. Avoid a preaching tone.
4. Do not use vague terms such as "joyful," "peaceful," "happy" or "changed" without explaining them.
5. Avoid using biblical or religious words such as "saved," "converted," "convicted," or "sin" without clarifying what you mean. These words do not communicate to non-Christians.

Presentation Tips

- A. Rehearse your testimony until it becomes natural.
- B. Rest in the Holy Spirit.
- C. Ask the Lord to give you a pleasant and natural countenance.
- D. Speak clearly in a natural, relaxed tone. Speak loudly enough to be heard by those in the back.
- E. When giving your testimony in a group setting:
 - 1. Try to glance at various people throughout the room. Eye contact brings people in.
 - 2. Do not talk on the way to or from your seat.
 - 3. Avoid nervous mannerisms such as rubbing your nose, swaying, jingling coins in your pocket, playing with a pencil or clearing your throat.
 - 4. Avoid using emotional pressure in your testimony to obtain decisions for Christ. Only God through the Holy Spirit changes hearts (Matthew 16:17; John 3:5,6; 1 Corinthians 2:4,5).

Remember that a successful testimony is one communicated in the power of the Holy Spirit leaving the results to God.

Appendix – Sample Testimony

The story of my life seemed to be a search for lasting satisfaction. In high school I searched for it in sports, friends, and alcohol. Often on the weekends I could be found at parties, drinking more beer than I knew I could handle. But something in me told me that I was doing the wrong thing. This was due to my religious upbringing. I had heard in church that some of the things I was doing were wrong. But I continued to do them because I thought they would give me the satisfaction I wanted. But ironically, these same things never really gave me enough satisfaction.

When I was 17 years old, I went with other high school students to a one-week Christian conference. It was there that I met people that really seemed to have the inner peace and satisfaction I wanted out of life. They had more than religion in their life, they had a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. During the week, I heard Bible teaching that applied to me as a youth. I found out that the Bible was not only for old people in the church, but it was also for me as a youth.

All the things that I had heard about Jesus in the past seemed to come clear: He loved me, and He proved this love by dying on the cross to pay the penalty of my sins. The conference was the best week of my life. It was then that I had to make a decision: Would I continue in the same old way, or would I ask Jesus to come into my life, to forgive me, and start to change me? Could I trust Him to truly satisfy me? I knew what I had to do, so I gave my life to Christ.

After making that decision, God started to do some noticeable changes in my life. Beginning with the book of Matthew, I started to read the Bible daily by myself. I discovered that it wasn't boring, but a very exciting book.

Another change that God did in my life was that He took away my desire to attend the weekend beer parties. After all, they never really gave me the lasting satisfaction I wanted, and I often did things at the parties that I later regretted.

God is still changing me today in many other ways. As I look back at my life, I do not regret the decision I made to trust Jesus to come into my life. Nothing can compare with having a growing relationship with our Creator. Jesus is in my life, and He truly satisfies me. God said in Isaiah 55:2,3 "Why do you spend money for what is not bread and your wages for what does not satisfy? Incline your ear and come to Me. Listen that you may live." How about you? Are you satisfied deep down inside?