

What is a Testimony?

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When we commit ourselves to Jesus, a change takes place in our lives. This changed-life story is known as a testimony. “Testimony” means sharing how your relationship with Jesus has impacted your life. The Bible tells us that when we become Christians our “old” self is put in the past and that we are made new because of Christ. The process of being “made new” is what a testimony reveals.

Testimony comes from the word testify. You might recognize this term as something that a witness in a court might give – they “testify” as to what they know or what they saw. When you share about what Christ has done in your life you are testifying to His presence.

Telling the story of Christ in your life is part of reaching out to others by telling them about God. You don’t need to be a Super-Christian to give your testimony, and your story doesn’t need to be flashy or dramatic; you only need to have a desire to tell others about God in your life and a commitment to living God’s way.

Why should I share my story?

Why tell your story? Because it will probably be a great experience for you, and others need to hear different examples of how God works. There is mutual blessing when a testimony is shared. How? In Romans 1:12 the Apostle Paul tells us that it is beneficial for us to be “mutually encouraged by each other’s faith.”

Everyone receives encouragement when a testimony is shared. You get encouraged because in order for you to share your story you will need to spend time thinking, praying and writing. And, that very process will serve as a reminder of all that God has done in your life. Since it’s so easy to lose sight of that, telling your story will bring it all back and give you a proper perspective of God’s work in your life.

As an added benefit, the listeners will also receive encouragement. Like you, Christian listeners will be reminded of how great God is, and this can cause them to be more receptive to God’s presence in their lives.

Also, non-Christians get a real, live example of how God makes a difference in one’s life. Many non-Christians dismiss their need for God because they don’t see how God is relevant to their daily life. But, they can’t disagree with your story. No one can...it’s your story! When a non-Christian hears about your journey with God, it immediately proves that God is real and alive in your life. Please understand this...no one can deny YOUR story!

What if I don't have anything interesting to share?

If you're a Christian that means that there was a time in your life when you weren't (no one is "born" a Christian). So how did you get from there (non-Christian: a life without Christ) to here (Christian: a life with Christ)? It doesn't have to be a wild, sex-filled, drug-induced incredible story. Some people have those stories, but most don't. Most people come to know Christ through a process of asking questions, getting answers, watching other Christians, and accepting God's free gift of forgiveness and eternal life. Nothing extravagant...but genuine and real. Maybe you don't have a story that will make someone cry or stand to their feet to applaud, but if you know Jesus, your story will encourage someone else's faith journey.

Or maybe you grew up in a Christian home and can't remember a time when you didn't believe. Talk to your family and have them help you identify the period in time when you realized you wanted something more than church and/or religion, a time when you wanted a real relationship with God.

Maybe even more important than a "when" is a "what"...what is God doing in your life today? The Christian faith isn't a one-time event. It's an ongoing relationship with the God of the universe. So, what are you learning? What are you going through? What's the condition of your heart? What has God taught you through some recent challenges? Keep in mind that great stories aren't always success stories.

The next section describes how you might consider putting your story together. But before you go ahead, take a few minutes and write down any thoughts and/or questions that are floating in your head right now.

Preparing Your Testimony

First of all, let me say that this is not the **ONLY** way to prepare a testimony, but this is one way that works. What I like about this method is that it takes you through a progression that not only helps you remember all the details but also keeps your listener interested.

What are some of the benefits of sharing your story?

- Gives hope to non-Christians (shows them God cares for everyone)
- Encourages Christians (reminds them of their own salvation)
- Reminds you of God's goodness (everyone needs a reminder of this)
- Gives the "big picture" of your life (includes your life before meeting Christ and after)

The format for your story might go as follows...

BEFORE + HOW + AFTER = my story

You want to share what you were like **BEFORE** you met Christ. What issues did you wrestle with, what were your thoughts about Christians, God and Church, what were you doing with your life, what direction were you headed, how did you feel, etc.

Then you want to tell **HOW** you met Christ. What was said, who told you about Jesus, where were you, what were you thinking, how were you feeling, what did you say or pray, etc. This part is critical because non-Christians need to know that it's simple to develop a relationship with Christ. They need to realize that they don't have to have money, a church membership, a perfect past, or dress a certain way in order to put their trust in Christ.

Finally, you want to tell what your life has been like **AFTER** trusting Christ to be the Lord of your life. Be honest! Don't think you have to make your life look neat and pretty. You won't hurt Jesus' reputation if you admit that you still have struggles. Even in the midst of your struggles, Jesus can teach you incredible things, so share what you've learned and where you hope to be as you follow Jesus every day.

On the back of this sheet are some things that you may want to think about for each of the different sections. Each section should be one paragraph telling about each of the points below it. Jot down some notes next to each of the points to get yourself started.

BEFORE (3-5 sentences)

- tell how you thought, acted, felt
- describe what you put your faith in or what you trusted for security, i.e. friends, money, dating relationships, school, activity, sex, sports, etc.
- share what you thought about God, the Bible, Christians
- tell what hope you had for the future

HOW (3-5 sentences)

- describe how you got to the place where you knew you needed Jesus
- who told you about Jesus, under what conditions, how long did it take you to make a decision to trust Christ
- share what you did or sold in order to trust Christ (this is important as many people have misconceptions)
- detail your immediate thoughts after putting your faith in Jesus Christ

AFTER (a paragraph)

- explain what your first days and months were like as a new Christian; what's life like now?
- What questions have been answered for you? What questions remain?
- Who have you reached out to since becoming a Christian? How do you know feel about God, the Bible, church, other Christians?
- What are the biggest differences in your life now that you're a Christian? Biggest joys? Biggest fears?

Preparation Tips

PRAY!!!

This is obvious but we can get so consumed in the task of writing and figuring out our testimony that we forget to do what is essential!

INVITE OTHERS TO PRAY!!!

Don't do this alone. Recruit at least three people who will pray for you before and during; try to include at least one adult on this prayer "team".

DO A HEART CHECK.

Are you ready to publicly represent Christ? Be sure your heart is right with God and others. Anyone you need to talk to? Apologize to?

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE.

Are you speaking to mostly Christian, non-Christians, a mix? Be sure to use language that your listeners will understand. Avoid church lingo like "saved," "re-dedicated," "invite Jesus into your heart." What do those words REALLY mean, especially to a non-Christian?

Here are some Language alternatives:

- Saved/born again TO became a Christian
- Re-dedicated TO got a fresh start; started over
- Invite Jesus in your heart TO ask Jesus to be in charge of my life
- Sin TO disobeyed; rebelled against God's way
- Repent TO go a new direction; turn towards God
- God's Word TO the Bible
- Fellowship TO connect with other Christians
- Washed by the blood TO God forgave me
- Grace TO getting what I don't deserve; a gift

WRITE IT OUT

Not only will this help you get your thoughts together, but it will enable you to begin remembering it. Plus, if you completely forget everything – including your name – its right in front of you. Also, be sure to type it out in a large font so that it's easier to read.

GET FEEDBACK

Before you present it publicly, be sure to show it to someone to get their thoughts and feelings. Be open to their comments so that your testimony can be as clear and effective as possible!

PRACTICE

Read it out loud AT LEAST 3 times. Trust me.

KEEP IT SHORT: 3-5 minutes

Always leave people wanting more.

IGNORE DOUBTS

Expect your mind to be filled with lots of doubts and messages like, "Who do you think you are to share your story? You're such a hypocrite. God can't use you." This is a strategy of Satan. Fortunately, for a Christian, you don't have to be perfect to share your story (no one is). But you do need to know that God is with you and is cheering you on. And so are the people who are praying for you.

KEEP YOUR FOCUS ON GOD

Remember, it's God who has given you a story to tell. Be excited about your story, but be sure to give God the credit He deserves.

HAVE FUN!

You are loved by God and your friends no matter how you do, so relax and enjoy the privilege of telling others about the incredible relationship you have (and they can have) with Jesus.