

Sharing Your Testimony

People love a good story. It has been said that stories are the most powerful form of communication. Stories draw people in, capture our interest, and connect us to one another. Many times we find common ground in the details and experiences of others. For that reason, stories are powerful. Including our story (our testimony) with a gospel presentation can serve to connect with others while restating the gospel truth.

Pastor Jim writes in the *Equipping Evangelism* resource, (<https://richlandcreek.com/article/equipping-evangelism/>)

“When possible our next step after having shared the gospel should be to tell people how God saved us and changed *us* through the gospel. God has commanded us to “declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). We should declare this every time we have the opportunity. Our story is really repeating the gospel in the context of who we were, what happened, and who we are now.”

As believers, we are part of the greatest love story the world has ever known. Ever notice that every great love story has substitution in it? Every Christian testimony is a story our gracious and merciful God substituting His Son’s life for ours—saving us from sin and death. Our story should consume us with joy and the desire to share this good news with others! Though this story involves ourselves, it should always point to the One who has saved us.

Each believer’s testimony is a beautiful picture of how life looked in brokenness, despair and separation from a Holy God, to the moment of the effective gospel call in their lives that led them to conversion when they placed their faith and trust in the work of Jesus Christ, therefore, being redeemed, justified and adopted by the Father. It is only in and through Him that we can proclaim this story. But the Christian testimony doesn’t stop there. It is also about life after conversion and the regeneration that takes place in a believer’s life. This change of heart is described in Ezekiel 36:26 when God says, “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”

While there is much we can say in our testimony and of our changed lives, we must be careful to remember **the gospel is the goal of our testimony**. We can think of our testimony as a tool for sharing the gospel, to glorify God, and to let others know how we came to know the Lord. As you write your testimony for the first time or as you revise it, it is important to remember that you should keep the focus on Christ, not on you. This might be more challenging than you think. Many times believers wish to convey how great God is because of changes in life circumstances.

With Christ as Savior, and the Holy Spirit indwelling us, some believers may experience wonderful changes in their earthly circumstances. For some, the circumstances of their marriages, relationships, family, work, or even health may see evidence of restoration. Yet, for others life does not get easier. Sometimes suffering and pain continue even after one comes to

know Christ. Diseases remain, relationships crumble, and sin tempts us daily (Rom 7:15). Indeed, life may get even harder (John 16:33).

What does this have to do with sharing our testimony? Sometimes, for those whom God sovereignly works amidst difficult circumstances, believers may speak of circumstantial restorations *more so* than the core message of the gospel—and in doing so shift the focus away from Christ. This can result in listeners understanding the gospel as, “*If I get saved, God will fix all my problems.*” The Bible speaks of no such thing. While it is true, some may have circumstantial recovery; others do not. Frankly, the Christian life is often “grieved by various trials” (1 Peter 1:6).

Let’s keep our focus on Christ and not on the ebb and flow of our circumstances. God is great not because of our circumstance but because God is God. When giving your testimony, remember the words of Paul “because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). That’s the heart of the gospel. It is important that in the time you have with someone, you share what God wants them to know about Him. You may only have 1–2 minutes when you are sharing with them. In that short time don’t miss the opportunity to tell others of the gift of salvation.

You’ve got this right? How hard could this be? After all, just tell your story. Yet, because it is our story, we may be prone to think our testimony requires no preparation or planning. Truthfully, more often than not, we can become nervous, distracted, and even lead ourselves down rabbit trails that divert us from our primary goal: exalting Christ. Consequently, this can result in squandering our opportunities with others to exalt Christ. This is why a little forethought and effort in preparing our testimony can go a long way.

Without planning and forethought, we very well may succumb to several pitfalls of sharing our testimony. For example, one pitfall of the Christian testimony is not preparing a well thought out, written version of your testimony. We fall into the trap of thinking, “*I can do this on the spur of the moment and it will come out perfectly given the time frame I have.*” Time allowances vary from situation to situation so we need to adjust what we say—on the fly. That is more challenging than you might think. Friend, for the majority of us, we need to put some effort and thought into what we will say before we say it. If we don’t, we will focus on the wrong person.

Another pitfall is rabbit trails—the death of testimonies. Testimonies must stay on track as time and attention spans are usually limited. What is so special, important, and cherished (or painful) to us from our past is not the purpose of our testimony. Keep the main thing the main thing—Jesus Christ.

Not too dissimilar from rabbit trails, is what has come to be called the “Selfie Testimony.” It is pretty much what you would think—testimonies that center on our lives rather than on Christ. One writer describes these as “Look! God is great because *me me me*. These are not road-to-Damascus stories, but spiritually tinted selfies.” Remember, the gospel is the goal.

Are you ready? Are you prepared to make a defense for the reason for the hope that is within you? We hear much about preparedness these days. Being physically prepared is important, yet how much more eternal impact spiritual preparedness has. As we look to incorporate all we're learning about sharing our testimony, it is time to actually write it.

How do we prepare a well thought out written testimony? Let's begin at the beginning—**before Christ**. When starting to construct your salvation story, it is important to identify how life was not fulfilling. Or perhaps it was fulfilling, and the problem is a question such as “Why does a good God allow suffering and evil?” Or you can explain how you were in disobedience to God, to parents, to authority, and the like. It does not have to be radical; it can simply be “I was once lost, but now I am found.” What is your story before you understood the truth of the Gospel? What did your life revolve around? Who did you think God was? Were you raised in church? What was your understanding of heaven or hell?

Next focus on the second part of a testimony—**trusting Christ**. As Ephesians 2:4 states, “But God,” we must remember that in contrast to our willful disobedience and walking in sin, God “being rich in mercy . . . made us alive together with Christ.” This is the place in your testimony where you focus on how you became a Christian. Describe the circumstances that caused you to consider Christ; identify the events that led to your conversion. Tell the gospel in clear statements:

- The Bible is true.
- The Bible says there is one true living God who has created everything, including us.
- He created us in His image to have a relationship with Him forever.
- The Bible says that because of our thoughts, motivations, and deeds, which are against God, we have broken our relationship with Him.
- Because people are the ones who broke the relationship, we cannot fix it; we have no hope in a relationship with God by our deeds. We need someone to pay for our sin.
- Because God loves us so much, He made a way for us to have a relationship with Him.
- He sent His Son who was all God and all man, who was born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died an atoning death, and three days later He rose again in a faithful resurrection; and offers us salvation as a free gift.
- The Bible says that if we place our trust in Jesus to pay for our sin, we can be reconciled to God forever.

Some questions to prompt you in this part of your testimony creation are: how did you hear the Gospel? What was your response to hearing the Gospel? During what part of your life did you hear the Gospel? What thoughts did you struggle with before you accepted Christ?

Lastly, focus on the third part of a testimony—**after Christ**. In the before, you expressed your understanding of the truth—you were estranged from God and could not mend that broken relationship by your own efforts. The objective now is to briefly show the difference that Christ has made in your life. Remember you are not trying to sell Christ to anyone. Do not make your testimony sound like you now have “health, wealth, and happiness” and others can have the same. Remember, the *fundamental* change in your life now that you have confessed Christ as

savior is restored relationship with God and eternal life with Him because of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (John 3:16; John 14:6; 1 John 5:12).

It is perfectly acceptable to work through a couple of drafts. When finished, ask a pastor or trusted believer to go through it and give feedback. Having another set of eyes is a blessing to us as we grow in this area.

Once you have finished writing your testimony evaluate how long it is. There are times the gospel delivery needs to be brief, as short as one minute—in line at a store, on an elevator, or in prayer before a holiday family meal. Other opportunities, we may have a 3 or 5-minute dialogue—over coffee, in the break room, over Zoom, or in the yard with a neighbor. As we learn to share the gospel through our testimony, consider what could be left out or added for brief 1, 3, or 5-minute gospel opportunities. Remember, the gospel is the focus.

One final word of wisdom for our testimonies. You hear it all the time. Someone is trying to learn a second language and engages in conversation with a native who actually speaks that language. The one learning the language inevitably uses a word that doesn't actually mean what they think it means. Sometimes those foreign language stories can be quite funny. Other times the miscommunication is painfully awkward or embarrassing. Even when people do speak the same language, words can mean different things to different people. As a matter of fact, words can even change meaning from one part of the country to another.

To muddy the water even further, Christians have cultivated their own language within the faith. This language is known as "Christianese"—a vocabulary spoken by Christians that is not easily understood by those outside the community of faith. Sometimes believers can become so accustomed to using these words, phrases, and jargon that it becomes second nature to them. We easily forget that this jargon is "like Greek" to those with whom we speak about the gospel and our testimony.

Friends, we must remember, when talking with those outside the faith, it is important to refrain from using "church words" that our listeners don't understand. These are words such as redemption, saved, born again, covenant, holy, disciple, election, justification, reconciliation, repentance, atonement. Those outside the faith in all likelihood have no experience with these words or, if they do, they very well may not understand them correctly.

Let's make sure our listeners actually understand what we're saying. Use common, everyday language that even a child could grasp. If you do use words like *sin* or *grace* or *saved*, make sure to clearly define them as you speak.

God's Word tells us that we are to share our testimony and proclaim His excellency (1 Peter 2:9). Let us worship our Savior by investing time, effort and thoughtful preparations in our testimonies. By this we will exalt the Savior and proclaim His wondrous deeds (Psalm 105).