



EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

SHARING YOUR TESTIMONY EFFECTIVELY

NOTES

Introduction

The Importance of Your Testimony

Your testimony is the story of your own personal pilgrimage to God. It is the story of how God drew you to Himself and to a saving faith in Jesus.

Your testimony is one of the most effective tools that God has given you to share your faith in Jesus Christ. It is effective for several reasons:

It is Commanded by Scripture

Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;
(Psalms 107:2)

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

(1 Peter 3:15)

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

(Acts 1:8)

It Relates the Facts

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

(1 John 1:3)

It Overcomes Satan

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

(Revelation 12:11)

It Glorifies Christ

And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

(Mark 5:18-19)

And many of the Samaritans of that city believed on him for the saying of the woman, which testified, He told me all that ever I did. So when the Samaritans were come unto him, they besought him that he would tarry with them: and he abode there two days. And many more believed because of his own word; And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.

(John 4:39-42)

The Value of Your Testimony

It is a Personal Experience (Human Interest)

People love to listen to other people's stories about themselves.

In the *Reader's Digest*, the first person story of human drama is one of the most popular articles in the Digest. If people are going to listen to our story we need to relate it in such a way that it is interesting, well-developed, and, polished. We also need to make sure that we stay in the first person and do not begin preaching to others.

It Cannot Be Refuted

Someone else cannot prove it did not happen since it is a personal experience which deals with an intangible aspect of your life (the spiritual) and is not subject to empirical testing or scientific investigation.

It is Easy to Share

It is natural for people to enjoy telling and retelling their personal experiences such as operations, accidents and other momentous events in their lives. In fact, sometimes it is very difficult to get away from some people without their telling you “that favorite experience” again—even if you have heard it a dozen times before. These same people, however, may find it very difficult (if not impossible) to preach or to do any sort of public speaking on a particular topic. But, because their testimony is their own personal story, they can tell it to one, a few, or a great many people without feeling inadequate.

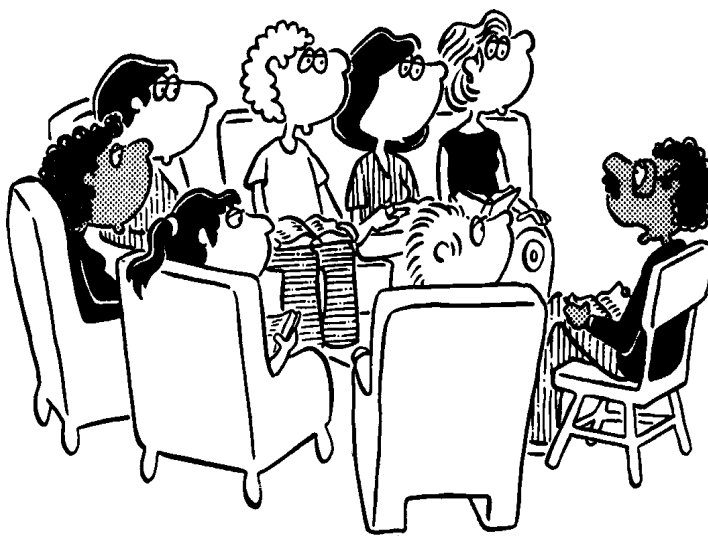
It Helps Share Your Life

If you are transparent and willing to share your life with others, they will be more willing to share their personal lives with you. If, however, you are reluctant to share your personal story, others feel the same reluctance in opening up to you. A Christian witness needs to take the initiative to set the kind of example he wants the relationship to be built upon.

It Takes Us Off The Pedestal

Often as Christians we find that other people elevate us to a position which is unrealistic. They look up to us as “saints” and expect us to live in perfection. They think that we cannot possibly be affected by the same kinds of daily problems they face. The sharing of our personal testimony takes us off of the pedestal and shows that we are real people, too.

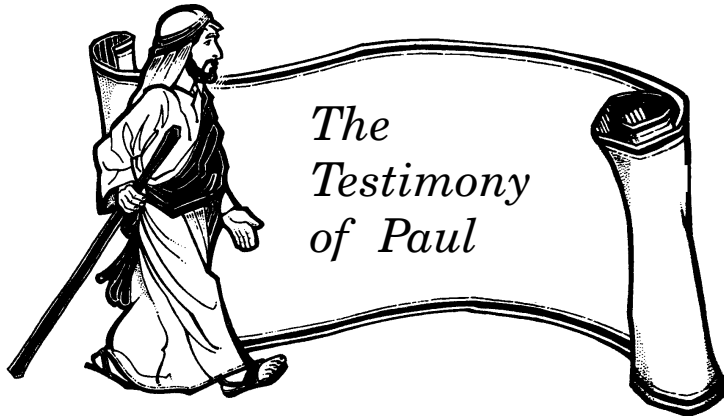
Tempted as we might be to let people put us on a pedestal, we dare not. We must be identified with sinful man; we are simply sinners saved by grace. Our good works must not call attention to ourselves, but should cause others to focus on God and glorify Him (Matthew 5:16).



How to Share Your Testimony

Paul's Example

NOTES



In the Book of Acts, Paul twice shares his personal testimony and gives us some good examples to learn from in developing our own testimonies.

The first occasion in which Paul shared his testimony occurred before a mob of people who were trying to kill him. An account of this is found in Acts 22. Paul's second opportunity to share his testimony was in the presence of King Agrippa and Festus, the Roman governor. This incident is seen in Acts 26. In each instance Paul divided his story into three parts:

- **What life was like before he came to Christ,**
- **How he came to Christ,**
- **How Christ changed his life.**

It would be good to study each of these accounts carefully, but we will outline here only the Acts 22 record.

Life Before Christ — Acts 22:1-5

In this first part Paul tries to identify with the people and exposes their "open nerve."

Identifies With His Listeners

Paul does this by speaking to them in their Hebrew tongue which immediately causes them to listen. Then he goes on to assure them of his own childhood — how he was taught by the respected Jewish teacher Gamaliel, and was zealous in the Jewish religion. He even shares about how he persecuted the Christians unto death and prison.

Exposes an “Open Nerve”

Paul found that the “open nerve” of this group was nationalism. The Jews listened to Paul until he got to the part of his story where God had sent him to the Gentiles. At this point they reacted violently and were ready to stone him had not the Roman guard intervened.

How Paul Came to Christ — Acts 22:6-16

Here Paul relates **why** he became a follower of Christ and **how** Christ changed him from a persecutor to a disciple.

Why He Became a Disciple

Paul here tells the story about how he was on his way to Damascus when a great light from Heaven blinded him and that Christ commanded him to go to Damascus and await further instructions.

How He was Changed

Paul relates that while he waited in Damascus, Ananias, under Christ’s direction, came to Paul concerning God’s mission for him:

For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

(Acts 22:15)

Life With Christ — Acts 22:17-22

Here Paul explains how God healed his “open nerve” of Jewish nationalism by sending him to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. The Jews had rejected his message of Christ, and one day the Lord appeared to him in the temple and commanded him to depart, “for I will send thee hence to the Gentiles.”

In sharing this aspect of his life after conversion, Paul ties the first part of his testimony and the “open nerve” to the healing of that particular problem through the changes Christ brought into his life.

Practical Considerations**Not Your Whole Life’s Story**

Resist the urge to tell your whole life story. Only tell what is relevant to describe your life before you came to Christ. Try to touch on some “open nerves.” Then share clearly and factually how you came to Christ and how He healed the “open nerves.”

A good, concise testimony should have between 600-800 words.

Divide into Three Sections

Follow Paul's example in dividing your testimony. This will help you and your listener to make the transitions clearly.

Amplify "Open Nerves"

Remember that you are trying to get people to identify with you. Review the lesson on "open nerves." When you have decided on several of those that apply to your life, include them in your story.

Present Gospel Clearly

The only purpose for sharing your testimony with non-Christians is to tell them how Jesus can change lives. **Be sure that the Gospel is clear.** Use several Bible verses to build this point of your testimony.

Explain Healing of "Open Nerves"

In this part make sure that you follow through and **close up the open nerves.** Show how God has helped you with these areas of your life. It may be that you still are struggling from time to time with one of your "open nerves." Be honest and say so, but share that God is helping you daily to overcome in this.

Share with Discretion

It may be that you have something in your background that you do not feel free to share with just anyone. Leave it out and **build your testimony around that which you are comfortable** with. One day you may meet someone who is really struggling with the same problem you have faced. In such a situation you may feel led of God to go ahead and share your background to encourage them and let them know that there is hope for victory in Christ.

Stay in the First Person—Don't Preach!

Remember to stay in the first person when you share by using words like "I" and "my", and not words like "we", and "you". You may ruin the whole effect of your testimony if you start to preach. People are usually willing to listen to what God has done for you, but they may be offended if you suggest that they need to let God go to work on them. Let the Holy Spirit prepare the opportunity and open the door to go further in presenting the Gospel.

Appreciate Your Own Testimony

Be grateful that your testimony is your testimony. If God would have wanted you to have another testimony, He could have arranged it. Your testimony can reach a whole range of people

that another's testimony could not. Besides, all of us have the same basic needs and feelings. No matter what the specific circumstances and problems we may have faced, we can identify with the basic needs of guilt, loneliness, lack of purpose, and emptiness in others' lives, even though their situation may be entirely different from ours.

Be Factual

Often it is easy to stretch a point. **Don't!** If the Spirit is going to use us, we must be honest as well as factual.

Pray

Seek God's help and guidance as you develop this fantastic tool. God will give you countless opportunities to share it.

Principles of Phaseback Testimony

It is often difficult to relate to the man in the secular world with a testimony of a person who has grown up in a Christian setting and embraced Christ at an early age. The person who has no concept of Christ may find no identifying points as he hears this juvenile sounding experience.

To correct this, we can use a testimony called the "Phaseback Testimony" to help the person who made a decision for Christ in his or her early years.

The phaseback testimony first focuses on an overall picture of what the person has done in his life, such as schooling, marriage, family, job and present position in the world's point of view.

Secondly, this testimony will then phaseback to the point of conversion at a young age. At this point, the individual will move forward, showing how the power of Christ has affected both the decisions he has made and his walk with Christ

Thirdly, the benefits of conversion and growth can be identified through interactions of self-image struggles, employment decisions, marriage growth or child raising.

Also, when phasing back, it is important to clearly communicate the message of the Gospel and how that message began its transforming work in the person's life. (See example of Phaseback Testimony in the Appendix of How to Share Your Testimony Effectively. This can be found in Lesson 2/8.