



## Chapter 2

# YOUR TESTIMONY—BEFORE CHRIST

In this section you will write the first part of your personal testimony—what your life was like before you met Christ.

The objective of this portion of your testimony is to arouse interest in your non-Christian listeners by causing them to *identify* with you. Because all people have been made by God and for God, true fulfillment of our needs and desires can only come through Him. Apart from Christ, we all have the same basic emptiness and lack of fulfillment. As we recall our own lives apart from Christ, non-Christians will be able to identify with our feelings and thoughts because they also are seeking answers to the same questions.

An effective way to share these areas of need is to aim for an “open nerve” that is common to most of us. Just as an exposed nerve in a bad tooth will cause me to react when it is touched, so all of us have certain basic emotional or psychological “open nerves” that are sensitive to the touch. Listed below are some common “open nerve” areas typical to most non-Christians:

- **no peace**
- **boredom**
- **no meaning in life**
- **worry**
- **fear of God’s judgment**
- **loneliness**
- **no happiness**
- **anger**
- **guilt**
- **depression**
- **inability to live up to God’s moral standards**
- **no purpose**
- **emptiness**
- **fear of death**
- **dissatisfaction with life**
- **gripped by sinful habits**

One or several of these needs may have characterized *your* life as a non-Christian. You will be able to better identify with your listeners if you build the first section of your testimony around one or more of these “open nerves.”

If you became a Christian as a child, this part of your testimony may be shorter, but do not consider it unimportant or ineffective. Start out positively—i.e. “I was quite fortunate to have been born in a Christian home, but that did not make me a *real* Christian...” or, “I made the most important decision of my life when I was only ten years old....” Even as a child you may have been troubled by an “open nerve” area which you can incorporate into this section.

**Remember**—The Holy Spirit is using your testimony! You needn’t have the world’s most dramatic conversion experience to be used by Him!

*As you write this section, the following suggestions should be observed:*

**Be Factual**

It is often tempting to stretch the truth for dramatic effect. Try to make the first section stimulating by being specific or by using tasteful humor.

**Be Specific**

“Each time I returned from a party, I would go home dreading the loneliness that I knew was waiting for me. Those were the worst moments of my life,” is better than, “I was a lonely person.” Specific incidents can illustrate a more general “open nerve.”

**Be Personal**

Use the pronouns “I,” “my,” and “me,” rather than generalize to “we,” “everyone,” “the world,” etc.

**Be Brief**

Don’t relate your entire life history. Remember, your objective is not to recite your autobiography, but to identify with your hearers. If you aim to finish giving your entire testimony in 5 minutes, this section should proportionately take 1 1/2 to 2 minutes of the time.

**Instructions**

*Now you are ready to write the first part of your testimony. Before you begin, pray and ask God to give you wisdom as you write this section. Also review the suggestions given for the first section.*

**Plan for Sharing Your Testimony**

1. List three “open nerves” that affected your life before you came to Christ.

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

2. What specific incidents or examples can you think of from your life that illustrate these three “open nerve” areas?

- a. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Now pick one or two of these “nerves” and incidents. Build the first part of your testimony around them. Remember, you are trying to get your hearers to identify with you, and you are not to tell your whole life story.*

If you came to Christ at a very early age, say so! It is exciting to hear the stories of people who didn’t have to walk the path of sin and wasted years to find God.

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, the testimony will then phaseback to the point of conversion at a young age which demonstrates how the power of Christ affected the individual’s decisions as he grew and developed his walk with Jesus Christ.

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

It will be important, also, when phasing back to clearly communicate the message of the Gospel that began its transforming work in the person’s life.

3. Write out your testimony. *(Develop from your plan above. Limit yourself to 150 to 200 words.)*

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