

Writing Your Personal Testimony

The following are some hints on how to get ready to witness to lost persons. One of your best resources is your own personal testimony. 1 Peter 3:15 (KJV) says, *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.* Writing out your testimony will help you clarify your experience. It will also help you get used to saying it briefly, making sure you hit the important points that you don't want to miss.

A brief outline of your testimony should include¹:

- My life and attitudes before following Christ:

- How I realized my need for salvation - that God was speaking to me about it:

- How I became a Christian:

- How my life has changed. What being a Christian means to me now:

Once you have a brief outline, begin expanding it into a story about your journey of faith. You might want to consider two or three different contexts that could require slightly different stories or explanations, i.e. might you be talking to adults or children, someone who is more or less knowledgeable about the Bible, or a close friend or family member?

¹ Adapted from MasterLife Discipleship Training, LifeWay.

There are different ways you can organize your story:

- Chronologically - Are there specific, identifiable times in your life when significant events occurred concerning your faith? Was there a big change in your life after you became a Christian? What events led you through the process of salvation?
- Thematic - This approach might be especially useful if you have been in church 'all your life' and your conversion did not require a big change in your lifestyle. Your testimony can center around a certain theme that has been an ongoing challenge, i.e. giving God control of your life, letting Him lead you through a particular crisis, or helping you overcome feelings of fear or anxiety in crisis situations.

1. Begin your testimony with an opening theme:
 - I have discovered how not to worry...
 - I have found a purpose for living...
 - I have overcome the fear of death...
 - I have found how that faith in God helps me cope with my problems...
 - Faith in Jesus gives me peace and joy in this troubled world...
2. Follow with a brief story supporting your opening.
3. Summarize your life before you became a Christian. Don't feel that you have to be too dramatic - that you had to hit rock bottom and God had to appear to you in a bright light. Just be natural and BE HONEST! But also avoid the temptation to get into too much detail - it will take too much time and by the time you get to the salvation part, you will have lost them.
4. Highlight events that led to your salvation. How did you realize that you needed Christ? What made you believe that Christ could make a difference for you?
5. Summarize your salvation experience. How did you learn how to accept Christ? What did you learn about the penalty for sin? (This is a good time to start sprinkling in some Scriptures!) How did you accept Jesus' sacrifice for your sin - what did you do? Be sure to emphasize repentance and faith in Christ as the only way to salvation.
6. Follow up with a brief summary of what your life has been like since receiving Christ. Be open and honest. Tell about a struggle or two you have had with your faith. But focus on what you have done to grow and strengthen your faith.
7. Close your testimony in a way that might lead to further conversation about salvation. You may use questions such as:
 - Has anything like that ever happened to you?
 - Have you ever thought about beginning a personal relationship with Jesus?
 - Have you ever come to a place in your life that you know for certain that you have eternal life and that you will go to Heaven when you die?
8. After you write out your testimony, let a friend review it. Is it too formal or "preachy"? Will it sound natural when you tell it to someone? Is it too long or too brief (about 2-3 minutes is ideal). Revise it, review it, and revise it some more until you are satisfied that it adequately tells your story and challenges the listener to take another step in their search for faith.
9. Finally, practice telling it with a friend. And again, revise, review, and practice again!