

PERSONAL TESTIMONY DEVELOPMENT

Welcome to the CMF Training page on **DEVELOPING YOUR OWN PERSONAL TESTIMONY**. Sharing our faith is fundamental to being a believer in the Saving Work of the Cross.

*You are writing a gospel, a chapter each day,
By the deeds that you do and the words that you say.
Men read what you write—distorted or true;
What is the gospel according to you?*

Anonymous

According to Easton's Bible Dictionary, the word **Gospel** means "good news." It is the rendering of the Greek *evangelion*, i.e., "good message." What good news? Paul captured the essence of the "good news" in 1 Cor 15:1-5:

*Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the **gospel** I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. [2] By this **gospel** you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.*

[3] For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, [4] that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, [5] and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.

The Gospel message is that Jesus died for sins on the Cross and rose again to sit at the right hand of the Father. By the fact that He died and rose again, we too, by faith in His atoning death and resurrection, can be born again into a new life in Christ that will endure for all eternity with Him.

That we are saved should be manifest in how we live our lives and what we share about our faith in Jesus Christ. We call this our "Testimony." The simplest testimony in the Scriptures is found in the story of the Blind Man in John chapter 9. This is the one-verse testimony:

John 9:25 "He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

It may be easy for a non-Christian to argue with our theology or opinions, but he cannot argue with our personal experience. It's a lot like the blind man referenced above. The Pharisees questioned his conversion theologically up one side and down the other, but all their arguments fell flat in light of the blind man's testimony of a changed life.

Can you articulate your personal testimony of how Christ saved you out of your sin? We want to help you learn to share your personal testimony in a concise and articulate manner. But before we get into that, let's look at a few of the verses from the Bible on being a witness for Jesus Christ.



BIBLICAL MOTIVATION

Why do we need to develop a personal testimony?

We are commanded to be ready to give an answer for the hope that we have.

1 Peter 3:15 – But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

We are Commanded to witness to others.

Mark 16:15 – He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.

2 Tim. 4:5 – But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

We are Commissioned to witness to others.

1 Thes. 2:4 – On the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts.

2 Cor. 5:19-20 – That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. [20] We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

We should be concerned about the souls of those who are Lost.

Romans 9:3 – For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race,

Matthew 18:10-14 – See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven. [11] The Son of Man came to save what was lost. [12] What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? [13] And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. [14] In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.



CAUTION – Before we launch into developing your own testimony, it is imperative to remember that the best "testimony" is the life lived for Jesus Christ, as a child of the King, not what we say.

There is a good saying: *People would rather SEE a sermon than HEAR one.*

We must never forget Matthew 5:16 *"In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*



GETTING LAUNCHED

At its essence, your personal testimony tells of how you came to a saving faith in Jesus Christ. Sharing how you became a Christian can be one of the best ways of witnessing. It is particularly helpful in presenting Jesus Christ to relatives and close friends who have seen a change in your life as a result of being Born Again.

Let's begin.

1. Before you begin writing, pray for God's help. Look to Him for wisdom and insight as you work on your testimony.

Let's jump in with a few questions:

2. Think about why should we develop our own personal testimony according to I Peter 3:15?

3. Read Acts 26. This is Paul's personal testimony before Agrippa.

How long did it take you to conversationally read Paul's testimony?

Was Paul preaching to Agrippa or sharing? What is the difference?

Do you notice any breaks in the testimony or shifts in emphasis during the testimony?

Now let's write out your story. Try writing it down the way you would tell it to an unbeliever.

4. Accumulate brief notes about your life on three separate sheets of paper labeled:

- 1) **Before** – What your life was like before you were born again. For many people who were raised in a Christian home, this can be ambiguous. If this represents you, write about what your life was like before you really got serious in how you lived your life for Christ. Some people would call this the point of yielding completely to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
- 2) **How** – Here write about how you came to Christ, to trust in Him. Did a friend lead you to Christ? Did you undergo a set of circumstances that brought you to a saving relationship in Christ? Again, if you were raised in a Christian home, write about what event transpired in your life to lead you to a Lordship decision to commit wholeheartedly to Christ.
- 3) **After** – Write about what your life has been like since you trusted Him and fully committed your heart to him.

5. Write out your first draft using your notes from the three sheets of paper. (It will usually take about five minutes to read it.)
6. Make any necessary improvements.
7. Cut your draft down to between two-and-one-half and three minutes when you read it.
8. Outline your "three minute" presentation on a 3 x 5 card or small piece of paper.
9. Learn to give your testimony without the outline.



REMEMBER – HELPFUL HINTS!!!!

- A. Make it sound conversational.
- B. Say "I" and "ME", not "YOU".
- C. Avoid religious sounding words, phrases or jargon.
- D. Generalize so more people can identify with your story.
- E. Include some humor and/or human interest.
- F. One or two word pictures increases interest.
- G. In the "BEFORE" include both good and bad aspects of your life.
- H. Is the Gospel communicated clearly?
- I. Are my opening and closing definite or are they wishy-washy? Avoid dogmatic statements.
- K. Sound adult, not juvenile.
- L. Remember:
 - (1) It is designed for a non-Christian.
 - (2) It is best suited for sharing one on one or in a small group.
 - (3) It is to be a "door opener," not a convincing tool.



**CONTINUING
FURTHER**

Now that you have your personal testimony written out, let's refine it somewhat.

1. Take your three sections of your testimony and work to come up with a one sentence summary of each section. Come up with one sentence that summarizes your life before Christ (before lordship); one sentence summarizing how you came to trust in Christ (how you committed to His lordship); and one sentence that summarizes what your life has been like since you fully trusted in Him. Basically, a 3-sentence testimony.

2. Using the 3-sentence testimony above, develop a 1-minute testimony. This will help you focus your testimony to highlight the key components of your conversion.

3. Now develop your testimony into a 10-minute version, as if you are giving a speech for school. Write it out as if it were an essay (autobiography).

4. Pray that God would give you opportunity to share your testimony. Maybe set a goal of once a day or once a week. Trust God, and step out in faith.



REMEMBER – Some further reminders:

Make it personal—don't preach. Tell what Christ has done for you. Use "I," "me," and "my"—not "you."

Keep Christ central. Always highlight what He has done for you.

Use the Word of God. A verse or two of Scripture will add power to your story. Remember that the Word of God has a keen cutting edge.



FURTHER STUDY

To go deeper on this topic, do a study of Paul's testimony in Acts 26.

Read through Acts 26 a couple of times, and then answer these questions:

- 1.** What were two possible objectives for Paul's speech?
- 2.** What is the significance of verse 3?
- 3.** Attempt to divide verses 4 through 23 into three separate sections, and attempt to give a title to each division.
- 4.** What characterized his background (verses 4-5, 9-11)?
- 5.** How did Paul explain the Gospel?
- 6.** What did Paul ask Agrippa? Why is this question important?

7. What was the outcome of Paul's speech?

8. What general guidelines from Paul's testimony can you use to mold your personal testimony?

Another avenue for going deeper is to read some biographies and/or autobiographies of great Christian men and women. Here is a very short list, but any Christian bookstore will have many more titles.

"George Mueller: Young Rebel in Bristol" by Faith Coxe Bailey.

"Charles Finney" by Basil Miller.

"Through the Gates of Splendor" (about Jim Elliot) by Elisabeth Elliot.

"John Wesley" by Basil Miller.

"Daws" (about Dawson Trotman) by Betty Lee Skinner.

"Hudson Taylor's Spiritual Secret" by Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor.

"Just as I Am," autobiography by Billy Graham.