



Using your testimony to introduce the gospel

Goal

Craft and present a well-prepared, thematic personal testimony

Introduction

What is the most interesting conversion story, or testimony, you have ever heard? Some people have dramatic stories but other testimonies are less sensational. What is the value in each kind of story?

Bible Passage & Questions

I Peter 3:15-16a "...but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect..." (ESV).

Put this passage in your own words.

How would you prepare an answer to someone who asks you why you have hope?

Consider & Discuss

Paul tells his own story in Acts 9, 22, and 26. Each time in just a few minutes, Paul shares about his life before he met Christ, how he met Christ, and his life after he met Christ. When you consider your inner life before you met Christ—your longings, unmet expectations, nagging questions, and relational conflict—what theme most stands out?

Craft your own 3-minute, thematic testimony. On a sheet of paper, notecard or on your smartphone, answer these three questions:

1. Before I received Christ I lived and thought this way [What were my struggles and needs? What stories could illustrate this point?]
2. How I received Christ
 - a. Tell about the circumstances such as where you were and what you were doing.

- b. What about the story of Jesus' death and resurrection drew you to Him?
 - c. Is there a Scripture that is meaningful to you?
3. After I received Christ, these changes took place.

Remember, tell your story in a way that will connect with the deepest longings and desires of their hearts. As a group, compile a list of Christian lingo -- words or phrases that might confuse our international friends -- and explore different words you could use instead.

Next Steps (Individually & Collectively)

Finish writing your 3-minute testimony. During the week, practice sharing it with someone. Identify strong elements in your partner's testimony and areas that could be strengthened. Here are some questions to help you consider your theme. Doug Pollock calls these questions "spiritual appetizers" (*God Space*, pages 83-85):

- What phrase sums up your attitude toward life before meeting Jesus?
- How did you attempt to meet the needs in your life apart from God?
- What things motivated you most before you became a Christian?
- Where did you find your sources of identity before encountering Jesus?
- What or who did God use to awaken you to your need for Him?
- What struggles, doubts, and fears did you have about making a commitment to Jesus?
- What kind of "aha's" do you remember when experiencing the reality of God?
- What changes did God begin to bring in your attitudes, actions, and appetites?
- Is there one particular experience with God that left the most lasting impression?

Remember: 1.) Develop a clear theme (the why), 2.) Don't use Christian lingo, 3.) Follow the simple outline of before/when/after you met Christ, 4.) Include a basic gospel outline and key passage, and 5.) Connect personal stories in the "before" with stories in the "after" section.

Additional Resource

Zeke Zeiler, "How to Prepare your Personal Testimony," EveryInternational.com (You will need to set up an account, if you haven't done so already.)