

Developing An Evangelistic Testimony

An Evangelistic Testimony is simply a thought through account of how you came to believe in Jesus Christ as Lord. It can be either an oral or written presentation of the facts surrounding the events, not a clever argument or exciting fictional story, but a clear presentation of facts.

Every human has a testimony relating to Jesus Christ. Some of how they've ignored or rejected Jesus, some of how they know nothing or little of Jesus, some of how they've casually entertained a distance awareness of Jesus Christ, and some of how they have turned their lives around to live for Jesus Christ as Lord. But everyone has a testimony relating to Jesus whether they realise it or not.

An Evangelistic Testimony is just that, evangelistic. It tells the gospel story through your life. It's not an end in itself, but simply a tool that you can use for Jesus Christ.

WHY SHOULD I HAVE A PREPARED TESTIMONY?

1. So that you can present a clear account of what has happened in your life in relation to Jesus Christ (1 Peter 3:15).
2. Because knowing how to present your personal testimony brings increased peace, confidence and assurance. Sharing your faith with others is given greater credibility because of the clarity of your story.
3. Your testimony gives a personal touch to the presentation of the gospel which helps others relate to Jesus Christ.
4. A memorised testimony equips you as a Christian with a ready tool for evangelism in daily situations.
5. Lastly, preparing your testimony gives you the opportunity to test yourself, checking just how genuine you really are for Jesus Christ.

Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you - unless, of course, you fail the test? (2 Corinthians 13:5).

It may be that through this exercise you come to realise that you believe about Jesus for the wrong reasons and that you need to repent of your sin that separates you from God (Romans 6:23; Acts 3:19; John 3:16; Romans 10:9-10). This could be your time of spiritual awakening, when you genuinely turn to Jesus Christ, confessing Him as Lord and receive the gift of eternal life.

Biblical Example by Paul: Acts 26:4-23 (NIV)

"The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee. And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve

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God day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead? "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them. "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads." "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' ""I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. "Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen--that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

HOW TO DEVELOP A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

- 1) Ask God for wisdom in preparing your testimony (James 1:5; 1 John 5:14-15). We need His help in order to be honouring to the Lord and effective with our testimony.
- 2) Write down a list of all the facts you can think of from before you believed, through the actual believing transition and following.

Remember, simplicity with clarity and accuracy are the building blocks of an understandable and usable testimony.

- 3) Now, from all those facts, develop a 3 point outline for a clear and logical presentation. Keep it relatively short (3 minutes).
 - a) Before I believed in Jesus Christ
 - b) How I believed in Jesus Christ as Lord
 - c) Since I believed Jesus Christ as my Lord
- 4) Be specific. Write a few specific things that occurred in each of the 3 categories. Tell it the way it was, in the correct order.
- 5) Keep Christ central. Highlight what He has done. This testimony is about Jesus Christ not just you. This is the Saviour's story of you.
- 6) Keep it simple, memorise it and share it with others. Remember, this testimony is only a tool. You can present it in many different ways and tell your story from different vantage points, but make sure you tell so that Christ gets the glory and others get the benefit of learning what Jesus Christ has done in your life.

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SAMPLE TESTIMONY

a] BEFORE I BELIEVED IN CHRIST

As a child I remember attending Sunday school and church. My relationship with God was impersonal and to me He was someone who was way out there somewhere. I never thought seriously about Him. My parents went to church each Sunday because it was the respectable thing to do but their attitude towards Christianity was luke-warm. As a child I enjoyed church and the bright singing etc. it made me feel good.

As a teenager and young adult, that superficial relationship went by the way, until I began to experience a hopelessness and lack of real purpose in life. Even though I had friends and fun, along with most of the things I thought essential for life, I still felt empty.

b] HOW I BELIEVED IN CHRIST

I came in contact with people my own age who seemed to have what I lacked, a genuine joy and purpose in life, not an off again - on again thing. They had life with a steady, durable quality about it. I found as I looked and listened, that the difference was that these friends had received Jesus Christ into their lives as Lord and Saviour, and I hadn't. I came to a time of decision, I acknowledged my sin and need of salvation. I believed Jesus died for me, He paid the price for my sin by shedding His life's blood on the cross.

So I prayed, "Lord Jesus, I believe you died in my place, taking my punishment for my sin. I now turn from my sinful ways and take you into my life to be my master from now on". I didn't hear a great sound or see bright lights, but I knew by faith that He had answered my prayer. The hopelessness vanished and was replaced by peace and joy that none of my pleasures were able to give.

b] SINCE I BELIEVED CHRIST

Since then Christ has been working in my life. I thank Him for the changes He continues to make. He has given me the desire and strength to change and live for Him. I have found the Bible to be reliable and an up to date guide for living (2 Timothy 3:16). He has given me purpose for living. Serving Him, telling others the good news of the gospel and helping others in the Christian family all helps me to be less self-centred. As I trust and obey God's Word my confidence in God becomes greater.

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