



# SHARING YOUR TESTIMONY

*"be ready always to give an answer"*

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# Introduction

The word *testimony* simply means; 'a declaration of truth or fact' or 'evidence or proof given by a witness in a court of law'.

We use the word *testimony* when asking someone to share how they became a Christian because they are *testifying* of what Christ and the Gospel has done in their life. When Paul stood before the Jewish rabble (Acts 22:1) and King Agrippa (Acts 26:2) he gave an *apologia* (defence/answer/testimony). Peter exhorts us to "*be ready always to give an answer (apologia) to every man that asks you a reason of the hope that is in you*" (1Peter 3:15)

One of the crucial points regarding each Christian's personal testimony is that *it is not supposed to be about them*. The goal of giving your testimony is to:

1. Glorify Christ as you declare what He has done in your life
2. Encourage other believers as they hear about this miracle of grace
3. Challenge unbelievers as they hear of the power of the gospel

Your testimony, then, rather than being about yourself, is supposed to be about Christ's work in you. Your personal testimony is a beautiful account of the power and grace of God in your life.

You may be invited to share your testimony in your church and your testimony is also a wonderful tool to use when sharing the gospel with others in a non-confrontational manner. Rather than beginning with a direct message aimed at the listener/s you can share the gospel message through explaining your journey from darkness into light before turning the conversation to their own standing before God.

This short booklet is designed to equip believers in sharing their testimony in such a way that achieves the three goals listed above.

Our prayer is that, as you apply the principles in this booklet when sharing your testimony, God would be glorified, believers encouraged and sinners challenged.

We will follow the account of Paul's salvation and the two times he gave his testimony in the book of Acts as a foundation. It may be valuable for you to put down this booklet and read these passages first:

- Acts 7:58, 8:1-4, 9:1-22 - the actual account of Paul's conversion
- Acts 22:1-23 - Paul shares his conversion before the Jews in Jerusalem
- Acts 26:1-32 - Paul share his conversion before Herod Agrippa II

# Attitude

*“Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you.” - Acts 22:1*

*“Then Agrippa said unto Paul, You are permitted to speak for yourself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before you touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: Especially because I know you to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech you to hear me patiently.” - Acts 26:1-3*

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The first thing we notice about Paul in these two opportunities he is given is his attitude toward his audience.

In the first account, he is standing before a mob of angry Jewish men in Jerusalem who were baying for his blood (Acts 21:27-36). They had already beaten him before he was rescued by the Roman soldiers.

Rather than speaking with anger or bitterness, however, Paul speaks to the mob with dignity and respect, calling them men, brothers and fathers. He won the opportunity to give them his testimony (Acts 21:40-22:1-2).

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In the second account, Paul has been held in custody for over two years, though he had not been charged of any crime (Acts 24:25-27, 25:24-27).

Again, we see Paul speaking with respect toward King Agrippa, complimenting him on his knowledge of Jewish customs and traditions and pleading to be heard patiently.

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When we are sharing our testimony, whether we are standing before the church or speaking with individuals, our attitude is important.

We are proclaiming the miracle of grace that Christ has performed in our lives. We may be speaking to unbelievers who are simply like we once were - blinded slaves to sin.

Paul was able to speak to his listeners with dignity and respect. He was glad to have the opportunity to give his defence.

- Speak with humility, remembering you were once a rebel of God
- Speak with respect, treating your audience with value and worth
- Speak with awe, considering this opportunity as a privilege
- Speak with excitement, knowing that you are sharing a miracle of grace

# Tarsus

*"Saul...made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison...And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord." - Acts 8:4, 9:1*

*"I am...a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as you all are this day. And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women...and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished." - Act 22:3-5*

*"My manner of life from my youth...at Jerusalem...after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee...I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them off in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them." - Acts 26:4-12*

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In this section of his testimony Paul is telling us about his background. Notice how briefly he covers decades of his life. His testimony, remember, is not about him - he doesn't need to spend a lot of time explaining every aspect of his life. He does, however, need to lay a foundation for his conversion experience.

In a matter of sentences we learn that Paul was a Jew, born in Tarsus and brought up in Jerusalem under the teaching of Rabbi Gamaliel. He became a zealous Pharisee and was bitterly opposed to Christianity, even to the point of bringing accusations against them that they might be put to death.

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As you share your testimony explain a little of your background. Who are you? Where are you from? What do you do? What is your religious background? What was your view of Christianity before your conversion?

Remember that this is not the main part of your testimony, this is simply the foundation that you are laying to help your listener/s see what you were converted from and saved from.

This is the time to bring up sin. It is good to go through the Ten Commandments explaining that you have broken them. Consider your audience before you go into detail about specific sins (for example - are there children listening?).

# Damascus Road

*“And...he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice...and he said, who are you, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you persecute...and he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what will you have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city” - Acts 9:2-9*

*“And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come near unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell to the ground, and heard a voice...and I answered, Who are you, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you persecute. And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus...” - Acts 22:6-11*

*“At midday...I saw in the way a light from heaven...and I heard a voice speaking unto me...and I said, Who are you, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus who you persecute...” -Acts 26:13-19*

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This is the main part of Paul's testimony - the actual moment of meeting Christ.

In the two accounts Paul tells us the time that he met with Christ (22:6, 26:13). He tells us that he heard the word of God (22:7, 26:14). He tells us that he came to a true conclusion of who Jesus was (22:8, 26:15). He tells us how he responded to all of this (22:10-11, 26:19).

Paul began by persecuting the Christians and now he is on his knees calling Jesus Lord and asking Him what He wanted him to do.

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As we share our testimony we need to be clear that there was time in our life that we were converted. We may not remember the exact time or date, however, there should be a pointing back to a specific conversion moment. Some of your listeners may not understand that you cannot be born a Christian - but that you must be born again.

It is also important to explain that it was the word of God that enabled you to understand your need for Christ (Romans 10:17). It is good to explain how the Holy Spirit worked in your life to lift your spiritual blindness (2Corinthians 4:4).

This is your opportunity to explain the gospel - to proclaim who Jesus is as Lord and God and what He has done through the cross and resurrection (Romans 10:9). Describe how you responded to the message of the gospel. Explain what it means to become a Christian and why it is important.

# Ananias

*“And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias...and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto you in the way as you came, has sent me, that you might receive your sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost...and he...was baptized...then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.” - Acts 9:10-20*

*“And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive your sight...and he said, The God of our fathers has chosen you...For you shall be his witness unto all men of what you have seen and heard. And now why tarry? Arise, and be baptized.” - Acts 22:12-21*

*First unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance...having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great “ - Acts 26:20-23*

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Paul's conversion was the beginning, not the end. He highlights a number of things about his life after his salvation. He has fellowship with the brothers and sisters in Christ in Damascus after meeting Ananias.

Paul obeys the Lord in being baptized and he begins declaring the person and work of Jesus Christ, the gospel message, to those who aren't saved.

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Your conversion is only the beginning of your new life in Christ. It is important that the remainder of your testimony speaks of the change Christ has made in your life (2Corinthians 5:17). You are telling your listener/s that the God of the universe has entered and changed your life; now is the time to give evidence of that change. We are not saved by works, but we are saved to work (Ephesians 2:8-10) and to be fruitful (John 15:1-8).

There may be people who are listening to you who don't understand the importance of church fellowship. There may be those who don't understand baptism. There may be some who have never been taught the importance of sharing the gospel with others. It is good, then, to explain how and why you have done these things.

When once we hated and rebelled against Christ, the Christian now seeks to obey Him, proclaim Him and fellowship with His people.

# Appeal

*“And as he thus spoke for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, you are beside yourself; much learning does make you mad. But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king knows of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believe you the prophets? I know that you believe. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost you persuade me to be a Christian. And Paul said, I would to God, that not only you, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds.”- Acts 26:24-29*

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As Paul is giving his testimony in Acts 22 he is interrupted by the crowd as he explains that he is a messenger to the Gentiles as well as the Jew (v21-22). He was, therefore, unable to give an appeal. He is also interrupted by Festus in Acts 26, however, he uses it as an appeal toward King Agrippa.

Notice that his attitude, even after being interrupted, is still respectful - he calls Festus “most noble”. He directly challenges King Agrippa regarding his view of what Paul has just explained and when the king replies that he is almost persuaded Paul gives a final appeal, declaring that his prayer is for all men to be saved as he was.

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As we finish our testimony, explaining briefly our background, describing how Christ saved us and detailing the change the gospel has made in our lives, it is good to finish with a short appeal.

If you are sharing your testimony with a friend, family member or stranger, we can conclude by asking them what they think about what you have just told them. It is time to turn the conversation back to their own standing before God.

If you are sharing your testimony in a church setting it is good to finish with an appeal toward any unbeliever present, urging them to seriously consider what you have told them and to come to Christ as you have to experience salvation.

It may also be of benefit to appeal to the Christians who are listening to you. Encourage them to make the message of Christ known to others that many more will have a testimony of what God has done in their lives through the power of the gospel.



# Conclusion

We hope this short booklet has been of some help to you as you prepare your testimony. Write your testimony out, following the principles we have seen through Paul's conversion narrative. Put work and effort into it, pray over it, write out a few drafts, shorten it and add to it as you think and pray through it.

Remember, giving your testimony is supposed to be done in such a way that it gives glory and honour to God, encouragement to the believer and a clear message of salvation to the unsaved. Therefore, it should take preparation on your part.

Once you have worked on it and prepared it, you will have a glorious personal gospel message that you can share many times. You should be able to give your testimony in just a few moments, with all the points giving in this booklet as well as being able to share it for a longer period of time in a church setting.

Below are some helpful questions to ask as you prepare your testimony:

- Who am I?
- Where am I from?
- Did I have a religious upbringing/what is my religious background?
- How did I live in rebellion before my conversion?
- What were my thoughts of Christianity and Christ before conversion?

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- When and where did the message of the gospel first challenge me?
- What was my initial response to this challenge?
- How did my views of Christ change?
- How did I become a Christian?

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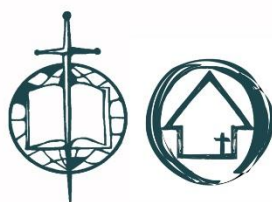
- How did the gospel begin to change me?
- How have my desires changed?
- How has church fellowship impacted me?
- When and why was I baptized?
- How and why do I serve God?
- Am I and why do I share the gospel message?

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- What should the person listening to me think about after I've finished?
- Why does the person listening to me need to hear what I am saying?
- Does all of what I have written point to and glorify Christ's work in me?

Every individual that has come to Christ has a story to tell. The story of God's work of grace in your life is a powerful tool for pointing others towards the gospel.

This short booklet aims to help you share your testimony in an effective way.



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