

#4 Sharing Your Faith Story with Others

LIVING ON MISSION 201

Purpose of Living on Mission: Equip students to walk by faith, communicate their faith, and multiply their faith. Top 20 things to help you not just survive but thrive in your faith for a lifetime!

Goal of Seminar: Testimonies are powerful and can be incredibly useful to bring people to Christ. Teach students the purpose of a testimony, when to share it, and how to best present their story in a gospel-centered way. Use the standard 3-minute testimony format that can be lengthened in varying situations, but brief enough to share with anybody! Discuss introducing the testimony as well as transitioning to a gospel presentation.

HOOK: Why are infomercials so engaging and convincing? Have you ever purchased something after watching an infomercial on TV?

ILLUSTRATIONS:

Add your own thoughts and illustrations in this column.

One of the main reasons why infomercials are so captivating is that they are full of personal testimonies. These testimonies are about skin care, weight loss, exercise machines, cleaning supplies, blenders, etc, but are personal and believable. They engage our hearts and we are drawn to listen.

In the same way, we want to be ready to share our faith stories. God tells us to be prepared to have a reason for our faith and our testimony is one of the most powerful ways to communicate our hope. Your personal story is one of the most powerful evangelistic tools!

Read 1 Peter 3:15

15 But in your hearts revere 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.

BIBLICAL EXAMPLE OF PERSONAL STORY

The Samaritan woman's powerful testimony

Read John 4:1-26, 39-42

1 Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John— **2** although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. **3** So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. **4** Now he had to go through Samaria. **5** So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. **6** Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon.

7 When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" **8** (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) **9** The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

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11 “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? **12** Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?”

13 Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, **14** but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

15 The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.” **16** He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.” **17** “I have no husband,” she replied.

Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. **18** The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true.”

19 “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. **20** Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

21 “Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. **22** You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. **23** Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. **24** God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

25 The woman said, “I know that Messiah” (called Christ) “is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.” **26** Then Jesus declared, “I, the one speaking to you—I am he.”

39 *Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I ever did.”* **40** So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. **41** And because of his words many more became believers. **42** They said to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”

Other examples in the Bible:

John 9:24-34

Acts 22:1-21

Acts 26:1-23

God chooses to use His people to share His Gospel. He has transformed you and has given you a new life in Him. Just like the Samaritan woman in John 4, God uses unlikely and imperfect people to accomplish His perfect plans. He has stewarded you a story to share unashamedly with others.

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What makes your testimony so strategic in sharing the Gospel? Why is it important in this generation?

"Postmodernists aren't all too sure of one central meta-narrative, a universally valid account of reality, but are VERY open to personal narratives. Stories that give meaning to the lives of individuals."

-Tim Celek, Calvary Church Newport Mesa

Read **Proverbs 25:11**

11 A word fitly spoken
is like apples of gold in a setting of silver.

THE PURPOSE OF A TESTIMONY

What is the purpose of a testimony?

- To communicate "Come and See" message. It should lead others to Jesus by testifying of the truth of Christ and what He has done in your life.
- Your personal experience validates the Gospel and illustrates a new and changed life in Christ!
- The purpose is to share with others the Gospel through your story and give them a chance to respond to Christ. Hint: memorize the verses from the "Knowing God Personally" booklet and weave them in your story.

WHEN TO SHARE YOUR STORY

When is it appropriate to share your story?

- When you only have a few minutes to share about Christ, share your 3-minute testimony. Even in just 3 minutes you can convey the main points of your story and share what Christ has done in your life.
- Use your testimony to clarify and/or personalize the Gospel message. The focus should always be what Christ has done on the cross and what God has done in your life. In almost every situation, your testimony would be appropriate!

BENEFITS OF A 3-MINUTE TESTIMONY

What do you think are the benefits of a 3 minute testimony?

- Flexible: Use it one-on-one or in a group, in a casual setting or at a meeting. Adapt the theme of your story to those you are sharing it with.
- Effective: You're forced to be selective, avoid extra material that can lead to tangents. Keep it centered on Christ, not on irrelevant details.
- Simple and Attractive: A concise testimony is easy to relate to and personal. It needs to be clear and repeatable.

TRANSITIONING INTO TELLING YOUR STORY

What are some questions you can use to lead into sharing your story with others?

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PREPARING YOUR STORY

Why do you think it might be important to have a prepared testimony versus telling it on the spot?

- Ask the Lord to give you wisdom and guidance as you write (James 1:5,6).
- Keep it to three sections
 1. **Before** you received Christ.
 2. **How** you received Christ (Remember: After hearing your story, someone should know exactly what they need to do to receive Christ.)
 3. **After** you received Christ.
- Begin with some sort of attention-getting sentence. Think of something that would motivate people to listen. (e.g. "I was always a religious person until I became a Christian.")
- Don't conclude with a challenge to the listener, or offer something for them to apply. NO preaching! This is not a lesson!

TRANSITIONING FROM YOUR STORY TO THE GOSPEL

- If you're just telling your story to one or a few people, after you're done, ask them "Have you ever received Christ?" or "Would you like to know how to experience a relationship with God like this?"

Do you have any ideas of questions you could ask after you're done sharing your testimony to gauge their interest in the hearing the gospel?

3-MINUTE TESTIMONY WORKSHEET

Have the students look through the testimony worksheet. Explain it and highlight the helpful tips.

As you begin your testimony consider: 1) The age of your audience and 2) The period of time right before your life really began to change. If you became a Christian as a child, the emphasis should be on the benefits Christ has made in your life compared to what it might have been like without Him, or to those times when you haven't been close to Him. Choose one or maybe two Bible verses when they directly relate to your experience. Explain the references if your audience is not familiar with the Bible.

Before I Accepted Christ (or gave Him complete control)

1. What was my life like that will relate most to the non-Christian? (Don't focus on religious self)
2. What did my life revolve around the most? What did I get my security or happiness from? (The nonChristian is relying on something external to give him happiness)
3. How did those areas begin to let me down?

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How I Received Christ (or gave Him complete control)

1. When was the first time I heard the gospel? (Or when was I exposed to dynamic Christianity)
2. What were my initial reactions?
3. When did my attitude begin to turn around? Why?
4. What were the final struggles that went through my mind just before I accepted Christ?
5. Why did I go ahead and accept Christ?

After I Accepted Christ (or gave Him complete control)

1. Specific changes and illustrations about the changes Christ has made:
2. Why am I motivated differently?

Helpful Hints

1. Write the way you speak make the testimony yours!
2. Practice this over and over until it becomes natural.
3. Avoid religious words and emotional pressure
4. Give enough details to be interesting, but keep it to 3 minutes.
5. Be positive, and avoid speaking negatively about the church, organizations or people.
6. Start with an attention-getting opening sentence and close with a clear statement about how they can know Christ.
7. At the end - ask for their response! Gauge their interest in the gospel.

As you rely on the Holy Spirit and pray that God would use your story for His glory and good, be confident and courageous to share it often! Make a list of five friends who you'd like to tell your story!

Who are 5 people you already know in your life with whom you can share your faith story in the coming weeks?