

Sharing Your LIFE Story

Sharing the story of how Christ has saved you and changed your life is one of the most impacting ways to share the gospel. The testimony, in the truest sense, is simply being witness to the claims of Christ. In most cultures, the testimony of a witness carries a lot of weight in matters of justice and decision-making. We see the awesome power of a witness in Acts 26 when Paul gives his account of how Jesus Christ rescued him from death and changed the entire course of his life. Sharing your testimony is one of the easiest ways to transition into sharing your faith and one of the easiest ways to actually share your faith. It is also fairly non-threatening to the one you are trying to share with.

Before discussing how to share your faith through your testimony it is important that we define what **Evangelism** and **Salvation** is:

Evangelism: *Successful evangelism is the process of clearly communicating a Holy God's response to man's sin, his need for forgiveness, God's provision through Jesus Christ, and man's need to respond through committing his life to Christ through repentance and faith, while leaving the results up to God.*

Obviously the ultimate goal in evangelism, next to the glory of God, is that the hearer be saved. What is salvation?

Salvation: *Evangelism is a process that ends in a critical event. The critical event is salvation. In salvation our position before God goes from an enemy, deserving His eternal wrath separated from Him, to becoming His child, heir, and friend who is holy and blameless in His sight and who will not undergo God's wrath. All because we put our faith in Christ's sacrifice for our sins at the cross (receiving Him as savior) and surrendering our life to Him (receiving Him as Lord).*

The critical event mentioned in the above definition refers to the fact that salvation, unlike evangelism, is *not* a process. Salvation is a point where, by God's power through the Holy Spirit, we cross over from death to life. Jesus explained this point of conversion in John 5:24, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." There is a point when you cross the line into salvation. The Bible tells us that there will be a definite change. 2 Corinthians 5:17 clearly points this out, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" In Galatians 6:15 it is made even more clear, "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation."

Death

Love for Sin
Indifference toward God's Word
Christ is your enemy
Discontent lifestyle
Your purposes drive you
Indifference or hatred toward Christians

Life

Hatred Toward Sin
Hunger for God's Word
Christ is the ruler of your life and desires
Content with Christ alone
Christ's Purposes drives you.
Love for Christians and your enemies

There is a line you cross (John 5:24)
There will be a definite change (2 Cor. 5:17)

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A Christian may not remember when it happened, but that is how God's Word says it happened. There has been a transformation, and people need to hear about it. The lost world desires to hear a witness to such an unbelievable event.

There are two major purposes in preparing your personal testimony: determination of your own salvation, and clarity and presentation of your testimony.

Determination of your own salvation. To determine whether one is really saved may seem like a scary ordeal. To some it may even pose as an offense. But searching one's heart to see if they are in the faith is very Biblical. Martin Luther, John Wesley, and John Calvin were all seminary professors, preachers, or priests before they came to the realization that they truly had not been saved. They were merely trusting in themselves, a ritual, or even a deep belief in God and Jesus, but none had experienced the life change necessary. In many of Paul's writings he warns the congregations to search their heart to see if they were truly saved. Jesus even talked of this when He said in Matthew 7:21-23, *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"* Note that Jesus made the issue for salvation a relationship with Him, not their works. Do you have a true relationship with Jesus Christ?

Clarity and presentation of your testimony. Having a clear, well thought through testimony is crucial to communicating the gospel completely. Your testimony should be communicated in such a way that the hearer would know how to accept Christ as their savior and lord as well. Paul even saw the need for the clarity of speech in 1 Corinthians 14:8-9, *"Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air."* Therefore it is important that you keep your testimony short and simple, interesting and clear, and accurate to the gospel message. What is the complete gospel? Below is method for remembering the crucial points of the gospel: **G.M.C.G.R.**

God is holy (There is no one like God. God is perfect and hates sin.)

Man is Sinful (Unlike God, man's nature is to love sin, and hate God.)

Christ died for man (Though man did not deserve it, Christ died for man's sin that he might have a relationship with a holy God.)

Grace not works (Man can only be saved by God's free gift of grace, not by man's good works. It is only through faith in Christ, that man can receive God's free gift of salvation. Everything rests on Christ's work on the cross, by taking our sin upon – Ephesians 2:8-9.)

Repentance and Faith (We must both repent [turn 180°] from our sins and put our complete faith in Christ's sacrifice for our sins alone. Repentance and faith is one motion, from self and sin, to God.)

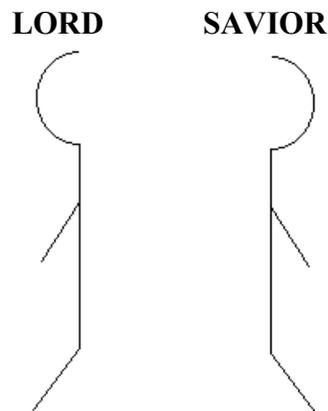
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Lastly, it is important that you avoid a split testimony. A split testimony is where salvation is communicated in such a way that you “accept Jesus as savior at one point in life and saw no life change,” and then “later made Jesus your Lord and saw a life change.” Not only is this perspective unbiblical, but also it can lead the hearer astray in thinking, “Yeah, that’s me, Jesus is my savior now and I’m saved, and later I will make Him my Lord.” Essentially what the hearer is saying is that I believe in Him now but will *repent* later. That is not salvation. When we are saved it is under Christ’s conditions, and He presents Himself as both Savior and Lord. Imagine trying to take only half of Jesus, as the diagram below attempts to illustrate.

Here are some guiding principles to keep in mind when sharing your faith with others, and some tips for sharing your testimony.

Principles:

- 1) We are commanded to share our faith. – Matthew 28:18-20
- 2) We are God’s ambassadors. – 2 Corinthians 5:19-20
- 3) God draws people to Himself and brings about the fruit.
–John 6:44,65, 1 Cor. 2:4
- 4) God’s Word is living and active. – Hebrews 4:12



Tips:

1. Make it personal – don’t preach. Tell what Christ has done for you. Use the pronoun “I,” “me,” “my,” and “mine.”
2. Make it short. Three or four minutes should be enough time to deal with the essential facts.
3. Keep it **Christ central**. Always highlight what **He** has done for you.
4. Use the Word of God. A verse or two of Scripture will add true power to your story. Remember that the Word of God has a cutting edge (see Hebrews 4:12, Ephesians 6:17). Make it clear enough that someone could know how to become a Christian just by listening to it.
5. Your testimony can be used in two major ways: 1) As a bridge to the gospel, possibly with another tool, or 2) as a vehicle to actually share the gospel.

On the last page of this article is a tool for you to bring together your own personal testimony. Write under each heading the four major points in a testimony: 1) your life before Christ, 2) how you came to see your need for Christ, 3) how you actually received Christ, 4) your life after Christ. Notice that there is a line drawn between point 2 and point 3 to signify the fact that you have stepped over to a new life.

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1) My Life before Christ.

2) How I saw my need for Christ.

3) How I received Christ.

Death

Life

4) My Life after Christ.