

## Giving a Personal Testimony

### I. Advantages of Preparing and Using a Personal Testimony

- A. People can argue with your theology but they can't deny your experience (or at least they will be very reluctant to do so!).
- B. Almost all people love stories. Your testimony is essentially a story about yourself.
- C. Preparing the testimony beforehand enables you to "always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Pet. 3:15b).
- D. A good personal testimony shares how Christianity is first a relationship (knowing Christ) and secondly a theology.

### II. How to Prepare a Personal Testimony

- A. Follow the many helpful suggestions on the following two pages in Campus Crusade's manual, *Sharing the Abundant Life on Campus*, 21-23.
- B. Be specific and relevant to non-Christians. These two areas are where most testimonies fail.
- C. Make your testimony revolve around a main idea that should include Christ's name and be a full sentence written at the top of your page. Examples: "Christ helped me learn to be myself," "Jesus replaced my religion with a relationship," "Jesus Christ gave me significance," etc.
- D. The main idea can be determined by answering several questions below. Think through these questions to develop the body of your testimony (also adapted from CCC materials):
  1. Pre-Conversion Life: What was your life like *before* you trusted Christ (or totally committed your life to Him)? This will help you determine the *main idea* of your presentation.
    - a. What were your attitudes, needs, problems?
    - b. What did your life revolve around? What was most important to you?
    - c. How did you look for security, peace of mind, happiness? How did you find your activities unsatisfying?
  2. Conversion: *How* specifically did you come to trust Christ (or how did you come to give complete control of your life to Him)?
    - a. When and how did you first hear the gospel? Or when were you first exposed to dynamic Christianity? Give specific events, people, etc.
    - b. What were your initial reactions to Jesus Christ?
    - c. When and why did you begin to feel positive about Christianity?
    - d. What was the turning point in your attitude?
    - e. What mental, family, or social barriers did you experience?
  3. Post-Conversion Life: What happened *after* you trusted Christ?
    - a. What changes did you see in your life (actions, attitudes, and problems)? Be specific!
    - b. How long did it take before you noticed changes?
    - c. In what areas are you still experiencing growth?
    - d. Conclusion: What does Jesus Christ mean to you now?

Note: Your testimony need not answer *all* of the above questions, but it should answer several. Also, do not try to avoid the use of humor in preparing your testimony, but be yourself.

## How to Use a Personal Testimony

*Sharing the Abundant Life on Campus* (Campus Crusade), 21-23 (1 of 2)

### 1. How to prepare a personal testimony

Any subject matter can be presented more effectively by careful organization. A carefully prepared testimony, given in the power of the Holy Spirit, can be of immediate and effective use in nearly every witnessing situation. It should be our desire to present Christ in such a clear and attractive, yet simple, way that those who hear will not only want to know Him, but they will also know how to know Him personally.

A carefully and intelligently worded three-minute testimony will communicate far more effectively than a prolonged one that includes a lot of extraneous material which will distract from, rather than emphasize, the point of personal commitment to Christ and what this can mean in a person's life.

- a. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom and guidance as you write (James 1:5-6)
- b. Follow a three-point outline: "My Life with Christ." [See the previous page 16 for details.]
  - (1) Life before knowing Christ
  - (2) How you came to know Christ (be specific)
  - (3) Life after you received Christ (changes He has made, what He means to you now)
- c. Emphasize point (3) above if you became a Christian as a small child.
- d. Begin with an interesting, attention-getting sentence and close with a good conclusion. Include relevant, thought-provoking, personal experiences.
- e. Write in such a way that others will feel associated with you in past and present experiences.
- f. Give enough details to arouse interest.
- g. Use at least one, but at the most two, Scripture verses.
- h. Edit carefully and rewrite as necessary before final draft.
- i. Note sample testimonies in the *Collegiate Challenge* magazine [see Dr. Rick's testimony on page 19].
- j. Choose something characteristic of your experience that is of general interest to non-Christians. Build your own testimony around a theme. Examples: personal success (your own past viewpoint and now from God's viewpoint), life's goals (past and present viewpoint), God's personal plan for you.
- k. Emphasize the fact that the thing that made the difference in your life was accepting Christ as Savior and making Him Lord and Master of your life. Keep in mind that your testimony should give enough details so that someone else would know how to trust the Lord after hearing it. Tell how He entered your life.
- l. Remember, the same Christ lives in you whether you trusted Him early or later in life. Do not be concerned that your testimony be exciting, just that it be interesting.
- m. Be realistic. Do not infer that Christ eliminates all the problems of life, but rather that He enables you to live them out with peace and confidence. "I am with you always."
- n. Be positive, not negative, from start to finish.
- o. Prepare your testimony so that you can share it in a group situation as well as with an individual.

## How to Use a Personal Testimony

*Sharing the Abundant Life on Campus (Campus Crusade), 21-23 (2 of 2)*

- p. Avoid the following when writing your testimony:
- (1) Including statements which reflect negatively on the church and other organizations or people
  - (2) Mentioning denominations, especially in a derogatory way
  - (3) Preaching at people. This is a testimony, not a “preachimony”
  - (4) Using stereotypes. People who work together for a period of time on a team tend unwittingly to copy one another.
  - (5) Speaking in generalities or using overworked terms such as:
    - (a) Strait-laced, sober, and sad
    - (b) Fantastic, exciting, and great
    - (c) Peace, purpose, and happiness
    - (d) Changed (without giving specific changes)
  - (6) Using words that are meaningless to non-Christians. Terms like “salvation,” “saved,” “born again,” and “conversion” need to be defined if used. Terms like “glorious” and “Hallelujah” are so ridiculed in some areas that you would do well not to use them at all.
  - (7) Being long-winded, and using unnecessary words. (Adhere strictly to the time schedule)
2. How to share your testimony.
- a. *Memorize* your testimony and practice it until it becomes natural.
  - b. Share your testimony with loving enthusiasm in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).
  - c. Smile often! Ask the Lord to give you a happy, radiant countenance. Use a natural speaking voice.
  - d. Avoid exhibiting nervous habits (especially with your hands) and other mannerisms such as rubbing your nose, jingling coins in your pockets, swaying, clearing your throat, and using “uh’s” and “ah’s.” Exhibit good posture. Do not talk on the way to or from your seat.
  - e. Avoid arguing and using high pressure methods to obtain a “decision” for Christ. Remember, men are born of the Spirit, “not through persuasiveness or logic of men,” though God may use both.

## My Personal Testimony

Main idea: Christ solved my insecurity of trying to be “good enough to reach God”

### Introduction

Have you ever experienced the frustration of just missing a higher grade in school? I remember one time back in secondary school I got a “B+” in math. I went to the teacher and asked him how close I had come to getting an “A-” and he said, “Well, Rick, actually you came pretty close. For the term you needed 435 points for the ‘A-’ but you had only 434 and 2/3 points. You just missed it by a third of a point.” I tried to convince him to let me slide just once, but he replied, “I’m just trying to be fair. If I lower the line below you, the next person down will complain.” But I was angry.

### Pre-Conversion Life

For a long time I thought *God* was like my math teacher! I thought God had an elaborate point system for all the good things I'd done, and that someday He would add up all my points to determine my eternal destiny. So, I tried to be "good enough to make it over the line" to reach God. I was a good student, obeyed authority, and tried to be a nice guy—all attempts to gain God's favor. Outwardly I looked confident, yet inside I was plagued with a real sense of insecurity. As hard as I tried, I knew I wasn't measuring up.

### Conversion

At age 13 two friends at school brought me to church, where I saw that this idea of God was distorted. Although I knew *He* was perfect, I learned that He expected *me* to be perfect to reach Him, which I wasn't about to claim for myself! But one night a few months later I learned from a speaker at a youth gathering that God never *expected* me to be “good enough”! God just wanted me to believe that Jesus died for me, taking my punishment for everything I had done wrong.

The speaker also said that Jesus was alive today since He rose from the dead, so He could change my life! What a liberating truth! Since Jesus was God's Gift, I simply received His Gift by saying, "God, I give up trying to be good enough for You on my own. I believe in Jesus."

### Post-Conversion Life

Beginning that night over twenty years ago my life changed.

For one, I had a peace in my heart and a security in my relationship with God that I had sought for years through good works. I haven't *stopped* trying to be good, but now it's for an entirely *better* motivation. Rather than viewing God as "the big guy in the sky" keeping track of the good deeds I've accomplished to gain His favor, now a *love* for God motivates me to be good.

Also, knowing God's love for me gave me a new love for people. I began to love my stepfather whom I had formerly despised and now we have a great relationship. This concern for people eventually brought me to Asia to share this good news with people here too.

### Conclusion

One favorite Bible verse sums up what I'm saying: “For by God's grace you have been saved through faith, and that's not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, so no one can boast.” Now I have what I've always wanted—the assurance that when I die I'll go to heaven—not because I'm good enough, but because God is so gracious!