

Developing a Personal Testimony

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Each person who has received Jesus as Lord and Savior is told to **testify** about Him to the unsaved, and the best way to share our salvation experience is by using our personal testimony.

A personal testimony about our walk with Jesus is important because it shares our experience of faith, demonstrating how the LORD has worked in our lives, which can encourage others.

A personal testimony is a powerful tool for evangelism, helping to convey the truth of the Gospel in a relatable and personal way.

- A personal testimony serves as a powerful **affirmation** of someone's faith in Jesus Christ.
- A personal testimony can communicate a personal relationship with God, showing how He has **transformed** lives.
- A personal testimony can inspire and **encourage** others who may be struggling in their faith.
- A personal testimony provides relatable stories that **demonstrate** God's love and grace in real-life situations.
- A personal testimony communicates how others have experienced God's work, which can motivate individuals to seek a **similar** relationship.

- A personal testimony is effective in **evangelism**, connecting with people on an emotional level.
- A personal testimony complements biblical teachings by providing a personal **context** to the message of Jesus.

Let's start with some dos and don'ts when it comes to sharing our salvation experience in the form of a personal testimony.

1. Our testimonies should **not** be extensive autobiographies; they should primarily be about our salvation experience, and they should be less than five minutes in length.
2. When preparing your testimony, be careful not to use terms that are confusing to non-Christians. Christian **language** and verbiage can be confusing to non-Christians.

Be simple and use verbiage that non-Christians can understand and relate to. Now these are just suggestions, but they are practical suggestions.

In 1976, presidential candidate Jimmy Carter ran his entire campaign on his claim of being born again, and so he was known as the born-again candidate. The problem is that since that time, the biblical phrase "born-again" has been so abused and misused in the secular media that it now means different things to different people. To the actress and New Ager Shirley MacLaine, being born again means being reincarnated. It is said that 23% of US adults believe in some form of reincarnation, but being born again doesn't mean reincarnation, so some people are confused about that.

Other biblical terms can be confusing to the non-Christian as well. Words like "saved" and "salvation" sometimes need to be defined for those who are unsaved.

3. While giving our testimony, we must be **specific** and share details that are essential to the presentation.

We should not bring up subjects that could be a distraction from the Gospel. (rapture theories, politics, conspiracy theories, etc.) If someone brings up controversial topics during your testimony presentation, then we should suggest discussing it another time. Also, we should be careful not to get so engaged in telling the external details that we neglect to emphasize the spiritual. Some people want their personal faith story to be so intriguing that they go into incredible detail about externals, and the actual spiritual content becomes almost second to everything else.

4. We must also be careful not to **glorify** the sin we were freed from.

Our testimony should put the greatest emphasis on Jesus and how He has made a difference in our lives. Something that is so common in testimonies is to overemphasize our life before Christ. Instead, we should put the most emphasis on the decision we made for Jesus and the difference Jesus has made for us since that decision. As we speak about our past, we must not address, in explicit detail, a form of behavior that might be embarrassing or even tempting and inciting to someone. We want to be honest, but the highlight of our testimony should be the salvation Jesus gave not the sinful lifestyle we were in.

5. We should make the first few sentences of our testimony thought-**provoking**; it should be designed to grab someone's attention.

Some people have more dramatic testimonies than others, but that doesn't mean dramatic testimonies are better than non-dramatic testimonies. We have all come from different backgrounds, and all testimonies that accurately describe someone receiving Jesus are good. We ought to communicate our account of the decision to receive Christ in the most enthusiastic manner possible, without being overdramatic about it because nothing is more contagious than someone's enthusiasm.

6. While giving our personal testimony, we should refrain from describing the **struggles** Christians experience.

Discussing temptation, spiritual warfare, backsliding, persecution, and spiritual ups and downs are not great topics for the unbeliever during the initial conversation about salvation.

Those subjects can be discussed at another time, but we should focus on the positive dimensions of receiving Jesus.

7. It is helpful for every true believer in Christ to sit down and thoroughly think about and **write** out their personal salvation testimonies.

After writing out their testimony, Christians should memorize it, at least in a general sense.

Now, let's discuss an outline for someone's testimony:

Pre-salvation, salvation, and then post-salvation.

These stages could be described as what our life was like before we received Jesus, the experience of receiving Jesus, and how our life has changed since receiving Jesus.

1. Describe your life before receiving Jesus Christ, our **pre-salvation** experience as a non-Christian.

One biblical example of a life before Christ is Saul, later known as the Apostle Paul.

Answer the question: *In a spiritual sense, where were you before your salvation?*

The account of Saul's conversion is mentioned three times in the ***Book of Acts***, first in ***Acts nine***, where his Christian conversion is narrated as to just how it happened. The second instance is found in ***Acts 22***, where after Paul preached the Gospel throughout Asia Minor and Greece, he returned to Jerusalem. The third instance is found in ***Acts 26***, where Paul had been imprisoned, and then he gave his testimony, which acted as his defense before King Agrippa.

The pre-Christian Saul had undeniable Jewish credentials, as a Pharisee and teacher of the Mosaic Law; he was careful to keep the Mosaic Law and all the rabbinical traditions.

Acts 22:3 "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.

Acts 22:4 I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women,

Acts 22:5 as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.” NKJV

And notice he said, "***and was zealous toward God as you all are today.***" To paraphrase this, Saul was a religious fanatic. Saul was so aggressive in persecuting the church that the highest Jewish authorities assigned him the mission of arresting and extraditing Christians from as far away as Damascus. Damascus was approximately 172 miles from Jerusalem. And Saul was commissioned to go there, find Christians, arrest them, bring them back to be falsely tried, tortured, and then executed.

From a spiritual perspective, Saul was a devout, hyper-religious Jewish man who was convinced that Jesus was a counterfeit Messiah. Pre-conversion, Saul was determined to do all he could to eliminate Christians and Christian influence from the earth.

2. In your testimony, describe what **caused** you to begin considering God and Christ as a solution to your needs.

Saul was such a difficult case that it required a miraculous encounter with Jesus to get his attention.

Acts 22:6 "Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me.

Acts 22:7 And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'

Acts 22:8 So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'"
NKJV

The bright light from heaven shocked and terrified him that he fell off the animal and onto the ground. Jesus had manifested himself to Saul in the form of a light so bright it literally blinded him. Saul was recounting what happened, and he had witnesses to his salvation experience. Men from his entourage were witnesses to the bright light, and they were terrified by it. The men who were with Saul were unaware of what had been said that got Saul's attention.

3. Your testimony should cover **how** you received Jesus Christ.

Your testimony should answer what realization you arrived at that ultimately motivated you to receive Jesus.

Saul asked Jesus in ***Acts 22:10, "What shall I do, Lord?"*** ***NKJV***

Saul was on the ground and called Jesus "Lord," which he had never done before. The word used here for ***Lord*** was to call Jesus master or ruler. Jesus is God in human form, and as God, Jesus has supreme authoritative rule over all things. In Saul's case, the motivating factor was that he suddenly realized that Jesus was who He claimed to be. Saul realized that Jesus was the Lord and God of this universe.

Before that moment where Saul was saved, he was convinced Jesus was just another crazed Jewish man who claimed to be the Messiah. Saul thought Jesus was a fraud, but all that changed the

second Jesus revealed Himself to him. I believe Saul's salvation occurred here in this first phrase of *verse 10*. He submitted his whole life to Jesus. This was unthinkable to him before that moment.

Acts 22:11-16

Jesus instructed Saul on what to do, and Saul **did** exactly what Jesus told him to do. There was this immediate Christian evidence in the form of obedience. Saul recognized Jesus was who He claimed to be and that He had authority to rule over him, and so Saul said, "*What should I do?*" Jesus told him what to do, and he immediately committed to doing that.

Describing our actual salvation experience is a critical component of our testimony. Saul became a Christian at a particular geographical location under certain circumstances. No one is born a Christian. For an authentic conversion to take place, a person had to come to faith.

John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

John 3:4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

John 3:5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

John 3:6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

John 3:7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

John 3:8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." NKJV

4. A testimony should answer the question of what having a relationship with Jesus **means** to me today. (post-salvation)

A testimony should address how life began to change after we trusted Jesus.

Immediately after Saul left Damascus, he began to preach Christ in the synagogues that He is the Son of God. Saul experienced immediate change. There was a 180-degree change. He went from Christianity's foremost persecutor to Christianity's foremost proponent.

1 Timothy 1:12 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry,

1 Timothy 1:13 although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. NKJV

Saul was considered a blasphemer because he argued that Jesus was a charlatan. He argued that Jesus was a false Messiah instead of Jesus as being God's Son. It became common knowledge that Saul, who became Paul, was the greatest

Christian in the history of the Church, and Jesus caused all that difference.

A testimony should answer what other benefits we have experienced since becoming a Christian.

Paul, in prison, said in *Philippians 4:10* ***I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.***

Philippians 4:11 ***Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:***

Philippians 4:12 ***I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things, I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.***
NKJV

Jesus enabled Paul to learn contentment as a post-salvation benefit. He hadn't learned that lesson before his conversion.

Of course, we know that salvation's biggest benefit that all people can ultimately relate to isn't in the here and now; it is the ticket to heaven called eternal life.

- **Practice** sharing your testimony to ensure clarity and confidence.
- Keep your testimony **focused** on key points to maintain the listener's interest, while making it around five minutes in length.
- Be **authentic** and honest about your experiences to relate with others.

Personal testimonies are vital in expressing faith, encouraging others, and sharing the message of Jesus Christ effectively.

Your testimony is a powerful tool to use to tell others about Jesus.