

GIVING YOUR "*TESTIMONY*" AS A METHOD OF WITNESSING¹

INTRODUCTION: Giving your personal testimony is a nice, low-key way of presenting the gospel to others. Almost everyone will listen to you share about how you came to receive Christ as your Lord & Saviour. Every believer should be able to tell others what God has done in his/her life. And while you are telling how you got saved, *you are also indirectly telling the person you are talking to, how they can be born again!* A testimony is *not* to be a sermon! A testimony should be fairly brief (5-10 min).

1. WHAT IS CONTAINED IN A PERSONAL TESTIMONY? The apostle Paul shows us in I Timothy 1:12-17, where Paul gave his testimony.

1. PAUL RELATES HIS PAST LIFE BEFORE HE WAS SAVED - v. 13. IMPORTANT: In telling about your life before you were saved, *do not describe in vivid detail all the rotten, sinful things you did while you were lost.* To do so, is to glorify sin, instead of God. Paul did not go into gross detail regarding his sins, but relates the basic rebellion and sin he had in his heart toward God. He named the basic offenses (blasphemer, etc.) but didn't start listing the ungodly words & sinful acts that he had done. **We should never go into gross, specific details about our past, sinful lifestyle.** Scripture clearly condemns the practice of describing sinful practices and/or glorifying sin (Eph. 5:1-16, esp. v. 12). The Bible also says that we must be careful not to say or do things that will cause another person to be tempted or to "*stumble*" (Rom. 14:7, 13-15, 21). We are commanded to be "*wise in what is good, and innocent in what is evil*" (Mt. 10:16; Rom. 16:19; I Cor. 14:20 cf. Jer. 4:22 where Jeremiah said just the opposite was true of some of his fellow Israelites, much as it is true of many professing believers today!).
2. PAUL TELLS OF THE SALVATION THAT IS IN CHRIST - vv. 14-16. He points out that God's grace was sufficient to save him while yet a vile sinner (cf. Rom. 5:8-9). He talks about the love Christ had for him. "Grace," "faith," "mercy," & "belief in Christ," in order to obtain eternal life, are mentioned by him.
3. PAUL CLOSURES BY PRAISING THE LORD - v.17. Paul gives God all the glory for his salvation. And so should we!

2. SO... OUR OWN TESTIMONY SHOULD INCLUDE:

1. OUR CONDITION AND STATE OF MIND BEFORE WE WERE SAVED.
2. THE EVENTS THAT LED UP TO OUR SALVATION.
3. AN EXPLANATION OF THAT SALVATION.
4. A TESTIMONY OF THE CHANGE THAT HAS BEEN WROUGHT IN OUR LIFE SINCE RECEIVING CHRIST, THANKING GOD FOR WHAT HE HAS DONE!

3. GENERAL THOUGHTS & SUGGESTIONS.

1. WHEN YOUR EXPLANATION OF SALVATION IS GIVEN, ALL STATEMENTS SHOULD BE SUPPORTED BY QUOTING OR READING SCRIPTURE VERSES TO YOUR LISTENER.
Example: "*I finally came to realize that I was a sinner and separated from God. For the Bible says in Romans 3:23, 'All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.'*"
2. LIMIT YOUR TESTIMONY TO FIVE-TEN MINUTES. If you are talking to a relative in your home you can probably take all the time you want. However in witnessing to people on the street or just in general, we need to remember that they have things to do and places to go, and probably do not want to hear a 30 minute sermon!

¹ These notes were compiled by Rev. Mike Edwards, Goroka, Papua New Guinea, June 1998. The main points, & the vast majority of this material has been taken from discipleship materials written in the 1970's by a personal friend, the late Rev. Rich Kerns, & the staff of a Christian campus ministry known at the time as the "*Forever Generation*" (The organization later changed its name to "*Real Life Ministries*"). (revised December, 2017)

3. **LOOK SQUARELY INTO THE FACE OF THE PERSON YOU ARE WITNESSING TO, AND MAINTAIN AS MUCH EYE CONTACT AS POSSIBLE WHEN GIVING YOUR TESTIMONY.** It's hard for someone to believe your story about how much Christ means to you and how excited you are to tell them about salvation, if you are looking at the ground, staring at your feet, or looking over the shoulder of the person you are talking to at someone walking by behind them.

4. **THE SINCERITY OF YOUR TESTIMONY AND ITS EFFECTIVENESS IS DETERMINED BY HOW CLOSE YOUR WALK WITH CHRIST IS MAINTAINED.** An unsaved person can tell if you are just giving them a memorized, insincere, "canned" presentation. **Your testimony should be a genuine, earnest expression flowing out of a vital relationship with your Lord Jesus Christ.** To have such a vibrant relationship with the Lord, we must be talking to God throughout the day in prayer and spending time daily in His Word. We must be walking closely with the Lord, if we are to evidence "*the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Christ in every place*" (**II Cor. 2:14**).