

Sharing My Life Message

Discovering my Life Mission Part 2

God has given us this task of reconciling people to him...And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors" 2 Cor 5:18-20

TWO PARTS OF YOUR LIFE MESSAGE

- Part I: My Testimony – My story of how I began a relationship with Jesus.
- Part II: The Good News – Explaining how to accept Christ.

I. SHARING MY TESTIMONY

A personal testimony is the most persuasive form of communication.

The Bible is full of testimonies:

DAVID: *"Come and listen, all you who fear God, and I will tell you what he did for me." Ps. 66:16*

THE WOMAN AT THE WELL:

"Many Samaritans from the village believed in Jesus because the woman had said, "He told me everything I ever did!"" John 4:39

THE MAN BORN BLIND: *"But I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!" John 9:25*

PETER AND JOHN: *"We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard." Acts 4:20*

PAUL: In Acts 22-26 Paul used his personal testimony brilliantly to share with others the Good News.

THE VALUE OF YOUR TESTIMONY

1. It is unique! There are no others just like it.
2. It is personal and easy to understand.
3. You are the authority on it. It's difficult to argue with.
4. People love to hear personal stories and they remember them.
5. People can relate to it. It builds a relational bridge.
6. It's one of the most powerful ways to witness today.

Homegroup Questions: 1. What is it about a true story/testimony that makes it so compelling?
2. Why is it so important that we share our testimony with our non-Christian friends?

A. IF YOU BECAME A CHRISTIAN AS AN ADULT

THE FOUR PARTS OF YOUR TESTIMONY

1. What my life was like before I met Christ.

What common circumstances would a non-Christian identify with?

What were your attitudes that a non-Christian would identify with?

What was most important to you?

What substitute for God did you use to find meaning in your life?

(sports/fitness, success at work, marriage, sex, making money, drugs/alcohol, having fun, entertainment, popularity, hobbies)

2. How I realised I needed Christ.

What significant steps led up to your conversion?

What needs, hurts, or problems made you dissatisfied with the way you were living without God?

How did God get your attention? What motivated you?

3. How I committed my life to Christ.

What specifically did you do? Where did it happen?

What did you say in your prayer? Be specific.

4. The difference it has made in my life.

What benefits have you experienced or felt?

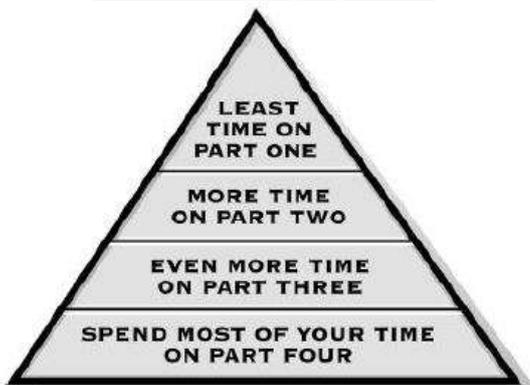
What problems have been resolved?

How has Jesus helped you change for the better?

How has it helped your relationships?

Give a current example.

The Testimony Pyramid



B. IF YOU BECAME A CHRISTIAN AS A CHILD BUT WALKED AWAY OR NEVER GREW UNTIL A DEEPER RECOMMITMENT AS AN ADULT.

Use the same four steps, but start with the time just prior to your recommitment.

Give some examples of how you were trying to meet your own needs without Christ but it wasn't working. Describe what caused you to realize you needed Christ directing your life and how you made a full commitment to him. Then explain how Jesus is currently meeting the deepest needs in your life.

C. IF YOU BECAME A CHRISTIAN AT AN EARLY AGE AND NEVER STRAYED.

Use the same four steps with this modification: Point out a deep need or common problem that you see *other people* trying to resolve. Point out how limited their attempts are to meet their own need. Then explain why you never experienced that problem by trusting Christ early in life. There is no need to say your exact age. Continue with steps 3 and 4.

Homegroup Question: 3. Share in your group briefly, at what stage you became a Christian (A, B or C.)?

SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARING YOUR TESTIMONY

Pray and ask God to give you the right words.
 Write it out on paper. God honours preparation.
 Keep it short and to the point. Don't lose sight of your goal.
 Be succinct. Avoid excessive, unnecessary details.
 Try to keep your testimony below 3 minutes.
 Refer to experiences most people have in common.
 Share a slice of your life (a story) that they will identify with.
 Be honest about your continuing struggles. Your life is not perfect.
 Don't imply that all of your problems ended at conversion.
 Spend the most time on part 4: the difference Christ has made.
 Emphasize WHY you received Christ (the benefits of doing it).
 Mention the benefit of being certain of your destiny when you die.
 Don't exaggerate or brag about pre-conversion sins.
 Don't make negative remarks about other religions or people.
 Don't mention any denomination.
 Don't quote a lot of Scripture. (A maximum of one verse)
 Don't answer questions they haven't asked.
 Give concrete examples of the changes in your life.
 The more specific you are, the more dynamic it will be.
 Avoid using dates, names, and ages. It doesn't matter to them.
 Be prepared. Practice it until it feels and sounds natural.
 Read it aloud and edit it to make it conversational.
 Let a friend read it and make suggestions.
 Speak casually and informally, in a matter-of-fact tone.
 Don't dramatise or embellish your story.
 Don't share mystical experiences. Share on *their* level, not *yours*.
 Don't talk down to people. Don't sound "preachy."
 Use "I, me, and my" not "You". It's about you – not them.
 Use humour - it reduces tension and relaxes people. Smile!

POSSIBLE TESTIMONY THEMES

How Trusting Jesus has helped me deal with my...

Worries / Anxiety
 Guilt/Shame
 Anger / Temper
 Emptiness/Lack of Purpose
 Grief
 Stress / Burnout
 Low self-esteem
 Poor health
 Disappointment
 Insecurity
 Regrets
 Discontent / frantic activity
 Fears
 Loneliness
 Lack of emotional support
 Addictions / Habits
 Self-centeredness
 Despair / Depression
 Cheap thrills
 Boredom with my life
 Fear of Death
 "Something was missing"
 Bitterness & resentment
 Pain of rejection
 Marriage Problems
 Financial Problems
 Business Problems

How Trusting Jesus has given me

Inner Peace
 Forgiveness and a fresh start
 Patience and love
 Purpose in life and meaning
 Comfort and Joy
 New energy and power for living
 Significance. I am valuable to God
 Strength to go on
 Trust in his good plans
 Confidence and sense of security
 A second chance at life
 Contentment and peace
 Faith to face my fears
 Assurance He's always with me.
 A church family that supports me.
 Power to change. Freedom
 Love for other people
 Hope
 Real, lasting happiness
 Adventure with God
 Assurance of heaven
 A sense of fulfillment
 The ability to be free from my past
 God's unconditional love
 Positive changes in my marriage
 Positive changes in my finances
 Positive changes in my business

God allows experiences in my life so I can relate to others who need Christ!

Homegroup Question: 4. What suggestion above do you find most helpful or surprising?

Choose a central theme. (See list on right of page above)

Homegroup Question: 5. Share with the group what theme/s you could chose for your testimony?

COMMON GROUND CIRCUMSTANCES

"Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some." 1 Cor 9:22

POSITIVE:

Adoption, breaking a bad habit, financial gain, raising kids, marriage strengthened or restored, new baby, new business, new friends, new home, new marriage, new job, success, renewed love, restored relationships

MAJOR CRISES:

Abuse, accident, addiction, abortion, bankruptcy, broken dream, eating disorder, death, depression, disease, discrimination, divorce, empty nest, financial problems, ill health, infertility, incest, jail, rape, surgery

Realise you have more than one testimony!

- Different situations will require different testimonies!
- Choose the testimony that best matches your listener.
- Realise you can tell about how others' lives have been changed too.
- Your small group can share your stories with each other.
- Don't use religious terms or clichés or broad generalities.
- Ask: "If I were a *non-Christian*, would this make sense to me?"

Homegroup Question: 6. Write out your testimony this week using a central theme to share with your homegroup or friend.

HOW TO LEAD INTO YOUR TESTIMONY

1. Listen for problems or needs that Jesus has helped you with.

"You know, that used to be a big issue in my life too (or my marriage, etc). In fact, I felt pretty (hopeless, frustrated, etc.) But then I discovered something that made a major difference in my life."

2. Refer to something in the news or on TV that deals with a common need or problem.

"Did you read about... I can sure identify with how those people feel. It wasn't that long ago that I struggled with that too. But then something happened that changed everything for me..."

Start with a statement they'd agree with or situation they relate to.

"It seems like life is getting faster and faster."

"Sometimes life just gets so complicated."

"Life doesn't always turn out the way you planned it."

Homegroup Question: 7. Why is it important to listen to what the other person is saying before you introduce your testimony into a conversation?

8. What difference will listening first make to how and when you share your testimony?

II. SHARING THE GOOD NEWS - GOSPEL

WHAT IS THE GOOD NEWS? Memorise these 5 basic truths!

1. GOD BECAME A MAN - SO I COULD RELATE TO HIM

"The Good News is about his Son. In his earthly life he was born into King David's family line, ⁴ and he was shown to be the Son of God when he was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit. He is Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom 1:3-4

2. JESUS DIED FOR MY SINS - SO I DON'T HAVE TO

"It is this Good News that saves you if you firmly believe it... that Christ died for our sins. He was buried, and He was raised from the dead on the third day, as the Scriptures said." 1 Cor. 15: 2-4

"For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them." 2 Cor. 5:19

3. JESUS DESTROYED DEATH - SO THAT I COULD EXPERIENCE ETERNAL LIFE

"And now he has made all of this plain to us by the appearing of Christ Jesus, our Saviour. He broke the power of death and showed us the way to life and immortality through the Good News." 2 Timothy 1:10

4. SALVATION IS A FREE GIFT - SO I DON'T HAVE TO EARN IT

"Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins." Romans 3:24

5. IT IS BASED ON FAITH - SO ALL I HAVE TO DO IS REPENT AND BELIEVE

Jesus said, "Repent of your sins and believe the good news!" Mark 1:15

"This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith. As the Scriptures say, "It is through faith that a righteous person has life." Romans 1:17

2 simple tools to share the Good News

- Use a tract: *Missing Peace or Steps to Peace with God*
- THE BRIDGE ILLUSTRATION

"But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God." John 1:12

III. TIPS ON HOW TO SHARE EFFECTIVELY

1. RECOGNISE YOUR PERSONAL STYLE OF WITNESSING

SOME COMMON STYLES:

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| The Serving Style | The Intellectual Style |
| The Bringing Style | The Testimonial Style |
| The Literature Style | The Confrontational Style |

Don't feel guilty about styles you don't naturally use.
Don't judge others who don't use your style!
Realise that Jesus never used the same approach twice

2. THINK THROUGH WHAT YOU MIGHT SAY

"And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it."¹⁶ But do this in a gentle and respectful way." 1 Peter 3:15b-16

3. ASK GOD FOR HELP IN CHOOSING THE RIGHT WORD

"And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike." Eph 6:19

4. SHOW LOVE - People don't care how much we know, until they know how much we care!

"If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." 1 Cor. 13:1

5. BE POSITIVE AND PLEASANT

"The wise are known for their understanding, and pleasant words are persuasive." Proverbs 16:21

6. NEVER USE ANY PUT-DOWNS

"Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone." Col. 4:6

7. TELL STORIES - GIVE EXAMPLES - People always relate to a story better.

"Jesus always used stories and illustrations like these when speaking to the crowds. In fact, he never spoke to them without using such parables." Matthew 13:34

8. LIGHTEN UP!

"For John the Baptist didn't spend his time eating bread or drinking wine, and you say, 'He's possessed by a demon.'
³⁴The Son of Man, on the other hand, feasts and drinks, and you say, 'He's a glutton and a drunkard, and a friend of tax collectors and other sinners!'" Luke 7:33-34

9. BE YOURSELF. BE NATURAL. DON'T TRY TO SOUND "SPIRITUAL"

"When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn't use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God's secret plan." 1 Corinthians 2:1

10. BE VULNERABLE AND AUTHENTIC

"We loved you so much that we shared with you not only God's Good News but our own lives, too." 1 Thess 2:8

11. MEMORISE A FEW KEY VERSES

"For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires." Hebrews 4:12

12. REMEMBER, THE HOLY SPIRIT IS USING YOUR WORDS - You are not trying to convince anyone on your own.

"For when we brought you the Good News, it was not only with words but also with power, for the Holy Spirit gave you full assurance that what we said was true." 1 Thess. 1:5a

HOME GROUPS: NEXT STEPS FOR SHARING YOUR LIFE MESSAGE

- Read the tips above & finish writing out your Testimony ready to share with your homegroup or a friend this week.
- Equip yourself by listening to other Christians testimonies (in homegroup) so you could share one of their stories with a non-Christian friend if their story relates better to you friend's situation.
- Begin praying for God to bring people into your life & the others in your group, that you can share the Good News with in a natural, casual way.
- Next week share your stories of how God has answered the prayer above.

God wants to use you! "David had done the will of God in his own generation" Acts 13:36a