

# Presenting Your Personal Testimony

According to Webster's dictionary, a testimony is a solemn declaration made by a witness under oath. It is evidence based on observation or knowledge. When we tell people what Jesus Christ has done in our lives, we are declaring what we know to be true. No one can deny your experience. Your personal testimony may be your most effective tool in sharing the gospel. Revelation 12:11, "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony...."

## **I. Benefits of a Well Organized 3 Minute Testimony.**

- A. It can have a direct impact on nearly every situation.
- B. It is equally effective one on one, in large and in small groups.
- C. It allows you to communicate the gospel in a way that is not offensive.

## **II. Things to Remember as You Write Your Testimony.**

- A. Pray and trust. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom and guidance as you write.
- B. Prepare your testimony so you can share it with groups as well as individuals.
- C. Keep your sentences short and simple. Stay within 3 minutes.
- D. If possible focus on inward change (attitudes, desires, values) rather than outward actions (drinking, smoking, gambling).
- E. Consider a three point outline containing:
  - 1. Your life before you received Christ
  - 2. How you received Christ
  - 3. The difference He has made in your life
- F. Remember, this is a testimony, not a spiritual biography. Tracing your years in Sunday School and camp experiences may not be relevant to what your listener is thinking and feeling.
- G. The following are things you will want to avoid when you write your testimony.
  - 1. Avoid statements that reflect negatively on other Christians, churches, or organizations.
  - 2. Avoid vague terms such as "joyful", "peaceful", "happy", or "changed" without explaining them.
  - 3. Avoid using biblical terms the non-Christian will not understand such as "saved", "born again", "converted", "convicted", or "washed in the blood."
  - 4. Avoid saying "you." This is a testimony, not a sermon.

- H. Begin with an attention getting sentence or incident.
- I. Be concise from start to finish.
- J. Be specific. Give enough detail to arouse interest.
- K. Be expressive and enthusiastic.
- L. Include personal thought provoking experiences.
- M. Use one but no more than two Bible verses if they relate directly to your experience and fit in naturally.
- N. Write a good closing to summarize your testimony. It is helpful if it relates back to your opening.
- O. Edit and re-edit and re-edit and re-edit.

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| <b>III. Action Point</b> |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A. Read the sample testimonies.</li><li>B. Complete worksheet #1 and #2.</li><li>C. Write a rough draft of your testimony.</li></ul> |
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**IV. Edit your Testimony.**

- A. When the rough draft of your testimony is completed, review the pointers and techniques found in the first part of this lesson.
- B. Look for the following things.
  - 1. Adherence to the three point outline: your life before Christ, how you came to know Christ and the difference He has made.
  - 2. Clarity in communication: concise, specific, etc.
  - 3. No statements that reflect negatively on anyone. No mention of denominations.
  - 4. Avoidance of vague terms and biblical words without clarification.
  - 5. No preaching.
- C. Rewrite your testimony as needed.

**V. How to Present Your Personal Testimony.**

- A. Memorize it so it is said naturally.
- B. Rehearse it until it becomes natural.
- C. Share it with enthusiasm in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- D. Smile often. Ask the Lord to give you a pleasant disposition.
- E. Speak clearly but in a natural, relaxed tone. Speak loudly enough to be heard.
- F. Avoid speaking in a condescending manner.
- G. Avoid arguing or using high sell methods in your testimony to obtain decisions for Christ.
- H. If presenting your testimony before an audience:
  - 1. Avoid annoying mannerisms such as swaying, playing with a pencil, or clearing your throat often.
  - 2. Look at the people to whom you are speaking
  - 3. Pray and practice, practice, practice.

# WORKSHEET #1

## Beginning & Planning to Write Your Personal Testimony

The following questions are to help you get started.

Simply jot a brief answer to the questions that apply to you.

1. **Before:** Try to recall your life at the time you received Christ.

What were your thoughts? needs? problems? joys? expectations?

How did you feel about your life at that time?

What in your life was most important to you?

What are some of the ways that you looked for significance, peace of mind and happiness?

In what ways did you find your life was not satisfying?

**NOTE:** These questions are also applicable if you received Christ as Savior at one point and yielded to Him control of your life as Lord at another point.

2. **How:** What led to your decision to receive Christ? Why did you decide to give Him complete control of your life and how did you make this decision?

When did you first hear the gospel? How?

What were your initial reactions to Jesus Christ?

When did you begin to have a positive attitude toward Christianity? Why?

What was the turning point in your decision making process?

What faith barriers did you experience?

How did you receive Christ?

3. **After:** What happened after you received Christ?

How long before you noticed changes?

Give specific examples of how God worked in your life, actions, and attitudes.

## SAMPLE TESTIMONIES

**Nancy Thies, Senior, Elementary Education**  
University of Illinois, Urbana

I began my gymnastics career with a cartwheel through my parent's living room picture window. To keep me from destroying the rest of the house, they shuffled me off to YMCA gymnastics camp.

From the time I began the YMCA classes, I felt that gymnastics was a challenge I could reach by myself. I enjoyed having my own identity.

But gymnastics is such a mental sport. One must concentrate. It's easy to burn out and to buckle under the strain. I looked at everything I did in a negative manner – "What did I do wrong? For what will the judges take off points?" My coach was a staunch perfectionist, and if I didn't perform the right way, I felt like a heel. I was so eager to please and so uptight about competing.

In 1973, when I was a sophomore in High School, I spent a week at a gymnastics camp, rooming with two other girls from Seattle. It soon became evident that they were really enthusiastic about Jesus Christ. I guess I had always been aware of God and had tried to rely on Him for my strength. But making a personal commitment to Christ – realizing that He had died for my sins and wanted to be not only my Savior and Lord, but my best friend – that was something no one had ever showed me before. So during camp I trusted my life fully to Christ, saying, "I want to know what it is to walk with You, to be more like You."

Once I committed myself to Christ, I found I could put all my feelings and anxieties in His hands. It was almost like taking a deep breath and letting all the tensions come out of me because I knew that Jesus Christ had everything under control.

Of course, saying that God is in control and then believing it when the going gets rough are two different things, and I was put to the test this year during the Nationals competition of college athletes. I trained and trained for the Nationals, working extra hard to make up for three weeks I had been down with strep throat.

Gathered with the other gymnasts for the final practice session the day before the competition, I was amazed when all the others stopped their own workout and applauded my performance. In fact, everyone told me that I was sure to win the meet. But that dream didn't last long. On my very last practice event I landed funny and tore every ligament in my foot.

Strangely enough, even lying there in a heap, I could still thank God. I know that many athletes are afraid of being seriously injured, and I used to talk about my "good luck" that kept me healthy. But in a relationship with Christ, it's not a matter of luck, it's a matter of purpose – His purpose for my life. He kept me healthy for a long time, and when it came time to be injured, He did it royally.

But I knew that He hadn't let me down. God promises that if He takes away something, He will return it one hundred fold. He took away my chance at the Nationals, but He gave me a peace that holds up under any kind of human disaster. I've found that God doesn't stand on the wayside watching our lives go by. He's intimately involved. I've learned to have patience.

I've learned to trust, as I've learned that everything works together for my good.

**Larry Burkett, Financial Counselor**  
Decatur, Georgia

My first real disillusionment in life came soon after I graduated from college. I realized that after six years of attending school in the evenings to get a degree in marketing and finance, I was totally disgusted with a system that didn't teach me what I thought I should have learned. My personal goals had always been to achieve education, position, and money in that order, but my education didn't seem to add anything valuable to my life.

Consequently, I set out to achieve my next goal – position. I tried to control everything that I came in contact with, including my business, my wife, and my family. I refused to take advice or direction from anybody. Confident that I could do a good job, they left me alone for fear of incurring my wrath. But even with position, my life was characterized by an alarming lack of peace and meaning. When I became vice president of a manufacturing company, feelings of rejection and depression put me in even worse shape emotionally.

I went on to achieve my third goal of accumulating money. A hoarder by nature, ever since the first dollar I ever made, I have always saved half of what I earned. But even financial status left me more and more depressed and, in conquering all three of my life goals, I discovered that nothing I had done was meaningful.

Meanwhile, as I looked around at the so-called Christians I knew, the avid Church-goer, they seemed as depressed and miserable as I was. And I thought, "What good would Christianity do me?" when the Christians I saw lived the same way I did?"

During a dental appointment, my dentist explained what Jesus Christ had done in his life. "I have perfect peace," he said. "I don't have to seek after new things to give my life meaning. I love my wife and my children; but most of all, I love my Lord."

God used that experience to spark an interest, and I joined the dentist's Bible study specifically to argue with him and shatter the credibility of his faith. But as I questioned everything he said during the next three or four months, I noticed wisdom in the doctor that I had not seen in anyone else. He never argued back, but took me right into the Bible. "Well, God said . . ." he would begin, giving me answers from Scripture. After six months of being confronted with the authority of God Himself, I asked Christ to come into my life, cleanse me from selfish attitudes, and inject my life with meaning.

After receiving Christ, I found that my old attitudes were being conquered. I began to love people, especially my family. But the greatest change during these past few years was that day in and day out, my life was characterized by peace – a contentment that comes from Christ, and not from trying to attain wealth and status.

**Virginia Van Ness, Administrative Assistant**  
Laguna Niguel, California

The word that best described my life was unmanageable. I had successfully reached a physical, emotional and spiritual bottom. My marriage was shaky and the reality that I might lose it as well as my children was evident. I had a problem with alcohol. I deceived myself and denied it was true. I was blind to my problem. Breaking out of denial required a very painful encounter with the consequences of my dependency. As I took a good look at my life, for the first time I really wanted to recover. After several vain attempts to do it "MY WAY", a very good friend told me, that I had CHOICES to make. I must be WILLING and I must want to recover! It was at that time that I made a total commitment to recovery and for a period of three years, I continued to rebuild my physical and emotional state.

God had been really good to me in helping me grasp onto recovery, however there was still a lot of guilt because of my past. I finally understood who Jesus is and what He had done for me. For weeks before Easter, my heart started to grow heavy about the lack of spirituality in my life. I seldom thanked God for my gift of sobriety or my

family. I just came to Him with more wants and needs. But that was no longer enough...I wanted more. Easter came and the day was wonderful, joyous and free, a real day of rest. Our family had a wonderful meal together. As we sat around that afternoon, suddenly the burden was back, weighing heavy on my heart. I asked the children what Easter meant to them. All they could say was, "We get chocolate bunnies and hunt for eggs and get and get and get and Oh, yeah, Jesus died on the cross." I was crushed. I gathered them up and we went to a local church. It was 6:00 in the evening and the church was locked. We sat outside the church and I told my children who Jesus is and what he had done for us to the best of my ability. I asked them to silently thank God for sending us Jesus. I also silently prayed. I prayed...

"Lord, I need you in my life. You were crucified for my sins and I am a sinner. My life is empty without you. My children are hungry for you and so am I. Fill me with the Spirit and never let me waiver from what is really important."

Tears were streaming down my face. My daughter, Nicole, looked at me and said, "Mommy, are they happy tears or sad tears." I responded with, "They are happy tears!" And, they were. That was the beginning of my new found walk with a very personal God.

Today, my life is free of the wreckage of my past. I have seen God heal a very unstable home with his love and presence. He has restored faith and trust in my relationship with my husband. My husband had also received Christ. Each of us is growing spiritually. Our values are changing. I am able to be more patient and kind instead of quick tempered toward my children and husband. Christ is in my life daily. I rejoice in knowing, above all He will never leave me.

**Ben Kline, Financial Coordinator**  
Laguna Niguel, California

For the first 30 years of my life I thought Christianity was just some sort of a bad joke. A figment of the imagination. Something for weak people who needed a crutch to get through life. I thought the Bible was a fairy tale and Jesus was a myth. After all, what were the odds that out of all of the religions of the world, Christianity just happened to be the one and only true religion?

My Uncle asked me to a weekend retreat. He said, "Come go horseback riding, boating, hiking and hear about Jesus." I said, "I like the horseback riding, boating and hiking idea, but I don't want to hear any religious stuff." He said "Come anyway and have fun. You don't have to do anything you don't want to do." So I went.

On the first day after the horseback ride, everyone went to hear the speaker. Everyone that is, but me. I stayed behind. But, then I got bored and curious. So, I quietly crept into the back of the room to hear what the speaker was saying about God and the Bible. I was very skeptical. I sat on the back row, so I could make a quick exit. I did not believe in God or that he could help me with my problems. However, the speaker said things that made sense to me. He spoke about forgiveness and eternal life. He said that I could have a new life in Jesus Christ. Later he asked if anyone wanted to invite Jesus into their life. If the answer was yes we should raise our hand. I raised my hand.

I didn't feel anything at that moment. But, within just a short time my life began to change in a rather dramatic way. I sensed a heavy burden had been lifted from my life. I realized it was the burden of guilt from the wrong things I had done in my life. I had a strong desire to read the Bible. I lost the desire to use God's name as profanity. I was able to forgive my father and our broken relationship was restored. My stomach problems from worrying healed as I learned to trust God with my problems. My life seemed to take on a fresh new meaning. As I read the Bible I realized how true God's Word is and it is no myth or fairy tale.

## **Dr. Henry Brink, CoMission Team Member**

Rovna, Ukraine

At the age of 10 my life was dramatically changed by the death of my father. My family was left in desperate circumstances. We had no money and no skills. My mother, sister, and even my seven year old brother had to find work. People gave us their used clothes and things we needed to help us but I was angry. I had no father with whom I could do things other boys did with their fathers. Because I had to work, I could not do the special after school activities.

Because of my childhood, I determined I would never be dependant on anyone ever again. I excelled in academics. I acquired 3 master's degrees and a doctorate. I focused on being a success in my profession and accumulating material possessions. I succeeded in becoming the only international representative in my field for a very large corporation. I was accumulating everything I desired through hard work and effort.

While I was in Belgium on business I became very ill. All I could think of was my desire to get home to my family. I was able to make it home and for the next 21 days I was in hospital. Twice during that time I was very close to death. I had plenty of time to think about my life, death, and God.

I had always believed in God. I grew up going to church. I read the Bible and believed what it said. I knew Jesus had died for me and that he loved me. I realized the things that were given to us when I was a child were from people who were giving out of love for us and love for God. But what I realized while I was so ill was that God wanted me to depend upon him for everything. There were things I could not control. This illness showed me that. I decided to give him my life completely, to go where he wanted me to go and do whatever he wanted me to do.

He has helped me with my anger and is giving me a thankful heart instead. He is teaching me that all that I have I can give to him and he will control it in a much better way than I ever could.

The greatest thing of all was to realize that God is my father. In the Bible it says that when we receive Jesus we become a child of God. (John 1:12) He was there all the time when I was a boy growing up.

## WORKSHEET #2a

### Writing Your Personal Testimony

A beginning, attention-getting sentence:

Before I received Christ I lived and thought this way:

How I received Christ:

After I received Christ, these changes took place:

(Review Worksheet #2b if you became a Christian at an early age.)

## WORKSHEET #2b

A beginning, attention-getting sentence:

My first encounter with dynamic Christianity:

My honest reactions to it:

Why I decided to yield my life to Christ and how I did it:

After I yielded my life to Christ, these changes took place:

## WORKSHEET # 3

### Critique of the Presentation

Evaluator's Name

Presenter's Name

1. Does this testimony express understanding/assurance of eternal life?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
2. Would a person know how to receive Christ from this testimony?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
3. Does this testimony contain too many externals and non-essentials?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
4. What positive benefits of a relationship with Christ are emphasized in this testimony?
5. Does the opening sentence get your attention? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
6. Is there a clear statement to close the testimony? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
7. What positive things did you notice in this communication?
8. Write out any notes or suggestions.