

# discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living  
Study Guide

## INTRODUCTION TO EVANGELISM LESSON 3: PREPARING A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

### INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module titled Introduction to Evangelism. This series of lessons aims to prepare participants to effectively share the Gospel with others. Understanding how God equips us for ministry and how to prepare our Gospel message for various worldviews will help us bring the unchanging message of the hope found in Jesus Christ to a world that does not yet know Him.

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on [www.discipleshipessentials.org](http://www.discipleshipessentials.org).

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# INTRODUCTION TO EVANGELISM

## LESSON 3: PREPARING A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

### WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

Your personal testimony is the story of how your life has changed since you became a believer in Jesus Christ. This lesson will help you in practical ways to prepare your story so you can share it with others.

### JUST SO YOU KNOW...

When was the last time you were able to share your testimony with others? Some churches make a regular practice of having members share what God is doing in their lives, and it can often be a powerful tool for evangelism and encouragement. You don't have to have a dramatic story in order for your testimony to be powerful! Every single time Jesus Christ transforms the heart and life of a person, it is a miracle. We were once dead in our sin – and now we are alive! We were lost, but now we have been given a new purpose, new direction, a new life! This is a great opportunity for you to think about the changes that have occurred in your life, and to give glory to God for them. Take some time to prepare your testimony so you can be confident about sharing it when the opportunity arises.

## GETTING STARTED

1. Would you be prepared if someone asked you to stand up in front of others and tell them how you came to know Jesus Christ, and to describe what He has done in your life?

2. When was the last time you heard someone else share their testimony (the story of what God has done for them)? How did hearing this testimony impact your faith? Were you encouraged, challenged, strengthened, made joyful, etc.?



❖ **WHAT IS A PERSONAL TESTIMONY?:** We each lead different lives, and the way we come to know Jesus Christ and receive forgiveness for our sins is unique. A personal testimony is the story of the change that has occurred in your life because of Jesus Christ. When we give our testimony, we ‘testify’ or ‘witness’ (give an account) of what Jesus Christ has done in us and for us.

- A testimony may be given in conversation, or in a more formal setting where many people are listening.
- Every believer has a testimony. We must remember that it is miraculous and supernatural for a person to be made new and receive forgiveness of all sins. However, thrilling stories are not necessary. Our honest story is what God calls us to tell.
- Our personal testimony can grow over time. It may include what God is teaching us in our lives right now or something God has recently done for us. It is important to communicate that God is continually at work in our life.

❖ **A BIBLICAL EXAMPLE OF A PERSONAL TESTIMONY:** There is a Biblical example for sharing with others what God has done in our lives. Paul gave his testimony during a riot, as seen in Acts 22.

- **Read Acts 22.** Write down what the focus of his speech was in each section of verses:

Acts 22:1-5	
Acts 22:6-11	
Acts 22:12-21	

The apostle Paul divided his testimony here into three parts. Before, How and After his encounter with Jesus Christ.

- Although his testimony remained basically the same, Paul adjusted the emphasis in relation to the particular audience being addressed. Read [Acts 21:37-22:21](#) and [Acts 26:1-23](#). How does Paul’s account of his testimony change? What remains the same?



- Each time he faced different crowds and important people, he chose to use his testimony as a means of delivering the Gospel message. Of all that Paul had access to – his expansive knowledge of the Old Testament, his understanding of philosophy and theology – he chose to tell the story of how God had changed him. Paul used few words, and his message could be delivered in less than five minutes. When we are preparing our own testimony, we must remember that it does not have to be long to be powerful and communicate truth.

❖ **WRITE YOUR TESTIMONY:** When preparing your own testimony, it helps to consider your life before Jesus, the events that led you to your conversion, and how your life has changed since. The following questions will help you write each portion of your testimony. You may not answer every question but they are provided to get you thinking.

- **BEFORE:** What was my life like before I received Jesus Christ?
  - What was my life like? What were my attitudes, needs, problems?
  - What did my life revolve around the most? From what did I get my security or happiness?
  - How did those areas begin to disappoint me?
  - Where did I look for security, peace of mind, happiness? In what ways were my activities unsatisfying?

- **HOW:** How did I come to know or receive Christ?
  - When was the first time I really heard the Gospel? How?
  - What were my initial reactions?
  - When did my attitude begin to change? Why?
  - What were the final struggles that went through my mind?
  - Even though there were struggles, why did I decide to accept Christ?



- **AFTER:** What happened after I received Christ?
  - What specific changes has Christ made in my life (actions, attitudes, etc.)?
  - How long did it take before I noticed changes?
  - Why am I motivated differently now?

- **What if I received Christ at an early age?** If you received Christ at an early age, you will still be able to follow the three points outlined above. However, you will probably put a greater emphasis on life after receiving Christ. We may not have memory of our life apart from Christ, but we have been rescued from what could have been a desperate life without purpose, or a life full of sinful self-destruction.

❖ **PREPARING YOUR TESTIMONY:** Consider the answers to the questions above. At the end of this lesson is a worksheet that has space for you to collect your answers in one place. It will be helpful to write your testimony as continuous paragraphs. You may wish to have your notes reviewed by a trusted friend, mentor, discipleship leader or pastor. At some point you may want to memorize your testimony. Work on developing your testimony until you are satisfied with its presentation. The next lesson will focus on presentation and when to use your testimony.

❖ **IMPORTANT POINTS:** There are some things you should keep in mind when writing your testimony:

- Introduce yourself to start. You may want to tell your audience where you come from, how you grew up, your name, who your parents are, etc.
- Your story does not need to be sensational, or filled with wild adventures to be effective. The miracle of one person turning to their Creator and receiving salvation is incredible enough!
- Keep your story positive, this is not the time to make negative remarks about the Church, denominations, organizations or groups. It is best not to mention people by name unless you have their permission to do so and it will help you connect with your listeners.
- Be specific in how your life has changed. You might say your life is more joyful, happy or peaceful now, but it is best to give examples of what that change really looks like.



- Religious words such as saved, converted, convicted, or sin can be difficult for non-Christians to understand. If you must use them, remember to explain them.
- Your testimony is not a formal speech, you may write as if you were speaking to a friend. Be honest, and let people see what God has really done in your life. This may involve admitting past ways of life that are not honourable.
- Include experiences your audience may relate to.
- You may reference a verse or passage of the Bible, but only where they relate directly to your experience or sharing the Gospel message. If your audience is not familiar with the Bible, you might choose to omit references and say “Jesus said” or “In the Bible there is a verse that says” rather than giving a specific reference.
- Make sure your testimony has an interesting introduction. Many people begin with “I was raised in a Christian home, and learned about Jesus from when I was young” but you may choose to talk about what you were like when you were young, or the questions you had about God instead, which may be more relatable to your audience.
- Write a closing that provides a logical conclusion, and an invitation to consider following Jesus themselves.
- When you make an invitation in your testimony, avoid using fear or emotional pressure to obtain immediate decisions. Only the Holy Spirit can really change someone – leave the results of your testimony to God.

#### IN SUMMARY:

- ❖ Our testimony is a powerful tool for sharing the Gospel, and for communicating the reality of all God has done in our lives.
- ❖ The Apostle Paul used his testimony often when he shared the Gospel, even though he had much theological and philosophical knowledge.
- ❖ A testimony does not need to be long – delivery should take no more than 5 minutes.
- ❖ Our testimony should focus on our lives before Jesus, how we met Jesus and how our lives have changed since.
- ❖ Our testimony should focus on God and His work, and be positive as we deliver the Gospel to our listeners.
- ❖ It is helpful to prepare our testimony in advance and even to memorize the points so that we are ready to deliver it at any time.



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. What are the benefits of a prepared testimony for sharing the Gospel? How would you use your testimony when talking with someone who is not a Christian?

2. Do you feel any shame, embarrassment, or timidity over sharing your testimony because of certain details in it? How can you resolve this?



## TESTIMONY WORKSHEET

**WHAT WAS MY LIFE LIKE BEFORE I BELIEVED IN JESUS CHRIST?**

**HOW DID I BECOME A CHRISTIAN?**

**HOW DID MY LIFE CHANGE AFTER I RECEIVED CHRIST?**

**RELEVANT BIBLE VERSES**