

LESSON ESSENTIALS

INTRODUCTION TO EVANGELISM

LESSON 4: COMMUNICATING A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

There are significant Biblical examples for using your testimony as a central component of your evangelism. Paul used every opportunity to share the message of the Gospel using his own story. Women and men who were changed through miracles told their story and the church grew and grew. It is important to consider how and where we can communicate our personal testimony. Read on for some thoughts on this topic.

After we have written down our own testimony it is time to consider how and where we can use it to share the Gospel. This lesson will be helpful in preparing to communicate your own testimony to others.

Note that with all his learning, all his wisdom, Paul used his own story rather than philosophy or theology to explain to others the difference that Jesus Christ makes in a person's life. Of all the tools available to him, Paul chose his testimony!

“Be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you”

1 Peter 3:15

Think about a message that affected you. Was it from a pastor who preached powerfully? Someone in the media who spoke passionately? Someone you knew who told a personal story? Chances are, if a message moved any part of you it was because it felt personal, and you connected with it.

We can use our own personal testimony to powerfully connect with others and share with them the Gospel. The purpose of a testimony is to present how you received Christ and how Jesus has affected your life. The Bible tells us that we should “prepared to make a defence to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). Part of this preparation is being ready to tell your own story, your testimony.

Our own testimony is unique in many ways. First, it is a story that only you can tell. It would not be as powerful delivered by someone else. The people around you will be interested in YOUR personal experiences. Secondly, it provides evidence of God at work in your life. People want to know that God makes a difference, and that Christianity has something to offer them. Showing them the difference it makes is one way to do this. They cannot refute your own experiences. Thirdly, it is effective in almost any situation. You can use it one-on-one with a friend, share to large or small groups, you can make it longer or tell it in several sentences. Lastly, it presents Christ in a clear and positive manner, and demonstrates for someone the steps they can follow to come to Christ themselves. It will speak hope to all who hear it and encourage them to want to know Him personally.

You might be wondering what you should do if you are unaccustomed to public speaking. Talking to others may make you somewhat nervous or fearful. Sometimes sharing your own story can make you feel vulnerable or afraid. If this describes you, remember to pray and ask God for the courage to share, and the right words to say. You might find it helpful to practice with a friend or memorize what you would say. Try to remember that you are merely reporting events that have happened to you, and it need not be more difficult than telling a friend what you did over the weekend.

Some important points to remember as you prepare to communicate your testimony powerfully.

1. Speak naturally. You don't have to speak like a pastor, or change the way you speak. Your testimony should come from you

naturally, as if you are talking to a friend about something that matters to you.

2. Pray before you deliver your testimony and rely on the Holy Spirit.
3. Be joyful! Do not dwell on difficult, sad or distracting points. The focus should be on the real joy that God has given to you, and His love for you. Pray that God will give you a pleasant and natural behaviour.
4. Speak clearly, and loudly enough to be heard – especially if you are speaking to a group.
5. When you are speaking in front of a group, avoid mannerisms such as rubbing your nose, swaying, fidgeting with your fingers, clearing your throat, etc. as these may be distracting to your message. Try to connect with your audience by focusing on them. This could look different depending on what is appropriate in your culture, but this can involve looking at the people you are speaking to.
6. Do not use pressure to obtain decisions for Christ. Only God through the Holy Spirit changes hearts. Leave the results up to God.
7. Avoid mentioning denominations, people or churches by name, especially in a negative manner. The message should be about God and what He has done.

These pointers should help you begin to practice telling your testimony with confidence and power, but remember that it will take time before it becomes easy for you.

One last important thought: Sometimes you might feel as though you were not successful in delivering your testimony because no one responds the way you hoped, or you can't tell if people are drawn to God, or no one said they wanted to give their lives to Jesus. It is important to remember that it is God who works in our hearts and sometimes the results of our words and actions are not seen for many years. It may be that people will remember your story in the future and it will convict them then. Your job as a faithful witness is to deliver your story whenever you have the opportunity and to leave the rest to God.

Whether it is at a church service, while casually talking with a friend, or sharing the Gospel on the street, there are many ways when you can share what God has done in your life. Pray and rely on God to give you these opportunities and give thanks that you can partner with God in growing His Kingdom for His glory!

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IN REVIEW

- We can use our own personal testimony to powerfully connect with others and share with them the Gospel
- If you are nervous about speaking in public, it may help to practice telling your testimony with a friend.
- Be conscious of your speech, mannerisms and attitude while sharing your story. Avoid anything that can distract from the message.
- Remember it is God who works inside us to give us faith and produce a change leading to repentance and accepting the Gospel. It is not our responsibility to determine people's response to the Gospel. It is only our job to ensure we have delivered it faithfully.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- What situations can you think of where it would be natural or appropriate for you to share your testimony? How could you create such a situation?

- How would you change parts of your testimony for different audience without changing the facts? For instance – talking to a family member, friend, a group of children, or those in a different culture?

- What things has God done in your life recently that you could include in your testimony in the future?

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