

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Leader's Guide

INTRODUCTION TO EVANGELISM LESSON 3: PREPARING A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Discipleship Essentials module entitled 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.

INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for these lessons is new Christians, those who would like a refresher on the basics of Christianity, as well as those preparing to teach these Christian practices and beliefs. Also, those with an interest in Christian thought will find value in these lessons as they pertain to daily living and choices.

The Leader's Guide is intended to help you as a leader in your preparation. These lesson outlines may be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials found online at www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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INTRODUCTION TO EVANGELISM

LESSON 3: PREPARING A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this lesson is to motivate and equip participants to prepare and use their personal testimony in sharing their faith with others.

LEADER'S NOTE

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. If you are able, consider inviting a few members of your Christian community to share their testimony with the participants. This will allow them to see the breadth of experiences of other believers. Be sure to share your own testimony with them at some point in this lesson. Part way through the lesson an assignment is given for each participant to write their own testimony. This may be done during your meeting time, or given as homework to complete before the next time you meet together. The next lesson deals with presenting testimonies, so it would be helpful if participants have completed this task first.

INTRODUCTION

Select two or three of the following questions to ask the group.

- ❖ 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?
- ❖ 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, moved, etc.?
- ❖ What do you wish your non-Christian friends and family knew about your relationship with Jesus Christ?
- ❖ Should we prepare what we will say if faced with presenting the Gospel to a non-Christian? Why or why not?

STUDY

You, as a leader, may find it appropriate to begin your lesson by sharing your own personal testimony, or bring in individuals from your faith community to share theirs.



TEACH

- ❖ **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.
 - A testimony is your statement as a witness of what God has done.
 - 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. 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. The experience of the love of God was not a one-time occurrence!
- ❖ **A Biblical Example of a Personal Testimony:** There is a biblical foundation for sharing with others what God has done in our lives. For example, Paul gave his testimony during a riot, as seen in Acts 22.

TASK

Have someone from the class dramatically read Paul's testimony from [Acts 22](#). Another member of the class should time them. A third should have their Bible open and count how many words Paul speaks. After this dramatic reading, point out that Paul used about 500 words for this account of his testimony. It can be spoken in about three minutes, depending on delivery.

- Paul generally divided his testimony into three parts: before, how and after.
 - Before becoming a Christian ([Acts 22:1-5](#))
 - How I became a Christian ([Acts 22:6-11](#))
 - After becoming a Christian ([Acts 22:12-21](#))
- Although his faith story stayed the same, Paul changed the emphasis of his testimony so he could better reach his audience. ([Acts 21:37-22:21](#); [26:1-23](#)).
- We see Paul deliver his testimony three times in the book of Acts. Each time when he was faced with 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 a message that could be delivered in less than five minutes. When we are preparing our own stories, we must remember they do not have to be long sermons to be powerful or communicate truth.



❖ **Consider these questions as you write your personal testimony:**

- **Before: What was my life like before I received Jesus Christ (Acts 22:1-5)?**
 - 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 (Acts 22:6-11)?**
 - When was the first time I really heard the Gospel? How? (When was I exposed to true Christianity?)
 - What were my initial reactions?
 - When did my attitude begin to change? Why?
 - What were the final struggles that went through my mind just before I accepted Christ?
 - Even though there were struggles, why did I decide to accept Christ?
 - This portion of your testimony should contain the Gospel message.

- **After: What happened after I received Christ (Acts 22:12-21)?**
 - What specific changes has Christ made in my life, actions, and attitudes?
 - 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-point outline. 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.

TEACH

❖ **Writing Your Testimony:** *At the end of this lesson, there is a testimony writing worksheet. You may make this available to your participants for homework, or for use in class time.*

- Pray and ask God to guide you with wisdom as you write. Work through each question on the testimony worksheet; it may take some time.

- Using the worksheet to collect your points together, write your testimony as a continuous paragraph. Bring these notes with you to your individual time with your mentor, to discipleship class, or share them with a trusted Christian friend.



- Memorize your testimony and practise your presentation.
- *You may suggest that participants bring their testimony outlines to your next meeting, at which time you could assemble them in groups of two and have them make suggestions to one another. If you are able to meet individually with each participant, this would be a good exercise for one-on-one coaching.*

❖ **Testimony Tips:** Remember that your testimony is the story of how you became a Christian.

- 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 about your story, 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, and share how you felt about what God was doing in your life.
- 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 perhaps an invitation to consider following Jesus themselves.
- When you make an invitation in your testimony for your audience to turn to Jesus themselves, 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.



DISCUSSION:

- ❖ Why is it helpful to prepare your testimony before opportunities to share arise?
- ❖ 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?
- ❖ What questions do you have about preparing your testimony?
- ❖ Do you feel any shame, embarrassment, or timidity over sharing your testimony because of certain details in it? How can you resolve this?

PRAYER

Close with a time of prayer. Pray that participants would be courageous in sharing their testimony, and not be ashamed of the story that represents their experience. Pray that they would write their testimony well, and that it would be a faith building experience for them. Pray that God would receive glory for changed lives. And pray that through this exercise and the faithful delivery of testimonies, many would come to know Christ.



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