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# Preparing a Testimony

The purpose of this paper is to help you tell your story with Jesus - in a way that is true to what God has done for you in Jesus, and true to your experience of it and your way of speaking.

## 'TESTIMONY'

Testimony is just a common word for giving a true account of a person or events. It comes from the court-world (Read Matthew 15:19; 18:16; 19:18; 26:62). However, the word becomes not just a court word, but a special Christian word.

### The Gospel as God's Testimony about Himself

Jesus takes the court word and says the gospel is *God's* testimony to all people about himself. If God was taken to court, the gospel would be his testimony about what he was up too!

Read Matthew 24:9-14

Q: What is God's gospel?

Q: What does it testify about him?

Q: What does this testimony achieve?

### Our Words as Testimonies to God

When God does his work in people through them hearing his gospel, Christians also begin to give testimony to Jesus (Luke 21:13).

Read John 4:1-26 & 39-42

Q: What is her testimony to the gospel?

Q: What does her testimony achieve?

'Testimony' pops up in heaps of places. (Consider reading Acts 22:18; 1 Corinthians 1:6; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Timothy 1:8).

So giving a testimony means telling the truth about what God has done in you through Jesus. God intends us to use such words! Even if people will respond in different ways!

## DIFFERENT KINDS OF TESTIMONY

Here are three forms of testimony that happen fairly commonly: telling your story, baptism or confirmation. Baptism or confirmation services usually give people words to say, but it is good for all Christians to be able to put it in their own way, with their own words, with their own mouth.

## HOW DO I PREPARE MY TESTIMONY?

A good testimony is

1. True to the fact that God saves you through Jesus.
2. Describes in some fashion this work of Jesus in you.
3. Gives the glory to Jesus, and at the same time is true and concrete about

your life – which Jesus has made the difference too.

Testimonies are all different. Some come from people new to Christ, others are stories of Jesus' work in the lives of people who have believed for ages. Either way, the questions below can help you frame your story. If they help you tell the truth, good. If they don't – you can find your own way to express it!

## QUESTIONING MY STORY

### *BEFORE*

What was my situation before Jesus intervened to bring me to faith, or worked to confirm my faith?

What was my life revolving about?

Had it begun to let me down? If so, how?

How did Jesus intervene in my life?

Are there concrete details that you think might be helpful for setting the scene for others?

What elements of that situation before Jesus went to work in you stick most in your thoughts?

In your feelings?

How would you describe your relationship with God before?

### *DURING*

How did Jesus step into your situation? What do you think he did?

How did the gospel enter your life?

How do you feel about this?

Are there concrete details that you think might be helpful for setting this

part of the scene for others?

*AFTER*

What has changed for you now?

What has changed in my motivations?

Looking back, with the bible open – how do you think God might describe what He has done in you? (This might be a little harder)

It is possible that you may find while questioning your life story with Jesus that you have unanswered questions about your relationship with him. If so, your testimony just became an opportunity to understand your faith better. Talk it over with an older Christian straight away!

### **STRUCTURING MY STORY**

Here are some ideas. They are not directions, just ideas.

1. Start by trying to tell it by writing it on only one A4 page. (You can expand on bits or subtract later)
2. Use some basic structuring ideas:
  - a. the before, during and after structure you used for questioning.
  - b. Find a bible verse that sums up your story and open and close with it.
  - c. Describe in detail of a pivotal moment, and finish by putting it in the context of what you now understand God to have been doing in you.
3. Consider an example:

You could look at Paul's testimony as you consider how to tell your story. His life before (Acts 22:1-5)

- Paul describes what he thought and did before he became a believer.
- Your goal: to give specific, yet appropriate, examples of what your life was like (attitudes, needs, problems) before Christ.
- Remember that examples you give will establish you as a credible witness in the minds of non-Christians. However, avoid a religious focus. (You want to make it about Jesus and your need for Him.) Don't spend a great amount of time talking about church activities or denominations before your life began to change. Likewise, avoid being explicit and sensational in speaking of drugs, immorality, crime or drunkenness.

How (Acts 22:6-11)

- Paul explained how he became a believer.
- Your goal: to allow the listener to walk away with a clear understanding of how you became a Christian and how he or she can trust Christ as the payment for their sins.
- Be careful not to use clichés and church language. Talk in terms they'll understand.

After (Acts 22:12-21)

- Paul explained how becoming a believer changed his life.
- Your goal: to explain specific ways Christ has changed your life -- to show that having Christ in your life really does make a difference!

4. A word on general truths and particular facts.  
Have you noticed that no-one reads philosophy, but everyone reads novels? Why? Because general, abstract truths are dry and hard to relate too – but novels put ideas in flesh, in relationships, in moments of action and decision.  
Do avoid 'Jesus has made such a difference', or 'I learnt that Jesus was my saviour'. Show us the difference, tell us what you have been saved from and what you are saved for. Be specific. Show us your life.

#### Final Words

I hope these words help you. I hope they aren't final word.! I hope they help you consider how you might reflect God's truth in your own words, and your words of testimony to God would have no ending and continue into eternity.

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