

Your Personal Testimony

How to Prepare Your 3 Minute Personal Testimony

Why Prepare Your Personal Testimony?

- To encourage yourself and others with the Lord's work in your life.
- To allow the Holy Spirit to lead you as you prayerfully prepare, as opposed to just "ad-libbing" or "winging it"
- To gain wisdom from others who can critique how it communicates.
- To use it or portions of it in witnessing opportunities.
- To use it in churches or evangelistic speaking opportunities.

Why 3 minutes?

- It causes you to leave out things that are not effective in telling your story.
- It causes you to be concise and sensitive to your listener's attention span.

Types of Testimonies

- Type A Became a Christian at a young age and has generally continued to walk with the Lord.
- Type B Became a Christian at a young age, but had a period where you were in rebellion, immature, or worldly.
- Type C Became a Christian later in your life.

Testimony Type A

- Your testimony will probably relate more to Christians—it may be hard for a non-Christian to relate to it.
- It will be a testimony of God's protection, faithfulness, and blessing.
- Don't feel like you've missed out because you haven't been wild! Be thankful for God's goodness and share your story with thanks and joy!
- As you prepare, perhaps think of a theme for your life. Perhaps how God has helped you deal with friendships, peer pressure, goals in life, etc.
- Seek to include specific incidents in which you've seen God work. Show people He makes a difference in our everyday lives.
- Share that you still have problems like everyone else, but Christ is there.
- Make sure you communicate that at a point (even if you don't remember the exact moment) you put your trust in Christ. *Don't let them think you've always been a Christian (because obviously you haven't).*

Testimony Type B

(refer to Type C, but make necessary changes, such as. . .)

- Begin with the story of your life during the time of rebellion or immaturity.
- When you get to the part about how Christ changed your life, refer back to the time you had put your trust in Him. Share briefly how you made the decision early in life. Share why perhaps you did not see continued growth.
- Share how the Lord brought you back to Himself.

****When we accept Christ, changes occur (II Corinthians 5:17).** If you feel like you made some type of decision early in life and nothing really changed, it could be that you were not really converted at that point. Becoming a Christian involves trusting in Christ for the forgiveness of sins and repenting of them, not just praying a prayer or agreeing to some truths about Christ. Your testimony might be confusing to people if it sounds like you became a Christian and nothing really happened until you decided to get serious about God. Don't hold on to the idea that you became a Christian at an early age because you've always thought that, if there is no evidence of conversion. On the other hand, it is possible to be converted and go through times of rebellion or immaturity because of being a babe in Christ.

Testimony Type C

- Begin with what your life was like before you became a Christian.
 - What were your attitudes and interests in life?
 - Was there a theme related to what you were seeking in life?
 - How would others have described you?
 - How did you view Christ and Christianity?
- Perhaps share a specific incidence that described what you were like.
- Share about the events or persons that caused you to begin to show interest in Christ.
- Share about your decision to trust Christ for forgiveness.
 - Paint a picture of what it was like that might help others see how they could do that also.
 - Why did you make this decision?
- Share about how your life began to change.
- Let them know you still have problems, but that Christ is there.
- Share how you are a different person since you have come to know Christ.

Three point outline to follow: Before—How—After

Before I received Christ:

- What was my life like? What were my attitudes, needs, and problems?
- Around what did my life revolve most? From what did I get my security or happiness?
- How did those areas begin to disappoint me?
- To what source did I look for my security, peace of mind, happiness? In what ways were my activities unsatisfying?

How I received Christ:

- When was the first time I heard the Gospel? How did it happen? 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 received Christ?
- Even though they were struggles, why did I decide to receive Christ?

After I received Christ:

- What are some specific changes Christ has made in my life, actions, and attitudes?
- How long did it take before I noticed the changes?
- How and why am I motivated differently now?

Helpful Hints to Writing & Presenting Your Testimony

What to do:

- Pray for the Holy Spirit to lead you as you prepare. (James 1:5)
- Write a rough draft of your testimony so it's easier to edit and memorize.
- Prepare your testimony so it communicates with groups as well as with individuals.
- Keep within your time limit of 3 minutes.
- Write your testimony first and foremost for a non-Christian audience. Later you can tweak it to your audience if different. A good rule of thumb though is to never assume that everyone in your audience are Believers.
- Speak boldly about Jesus. He is the main focus of your testimony.
- Make it clear how someone could begin a personal relationship with Christ (i.e. make sure you share the Gospel clearly).

What NOT to do:

- Do NOT use words or phrases that might not communicate clearly to a non-Christian (i.e. "churchy" or religious words). Keep it simple, so someone who has never heard anything about God or Christ can understand it.
- Examples of churchy or religious words or phrases that you *absolutely should not use* are: saved, sanctified, baptized, walked an aisle, joined the church, atonement, converted, convicted, communion, etc.
- Words you may want to use but need to explain in simple terms are: sin (rebellion against God), faith (trust), quiet time (reading the Bible and praying), etc.
- Do not make statements that reflect negatively on the church, organizations, people, or denominations. Avoid using any names of specific denominations.
- Don't glamorize your sin. Be careful that you don't sound like you're proud of what you did or that it still sounds fun.
- Don't get too detailed as you describe your sinful lifestyle. Not everyone needs to know the specifics of what you did. Maybe that would best be shared with a few trusted friends. (Ex. You can say you were involved with drugs without listing all the types. Or you can say you were in some bad relationships without divulging your sexual life history.)
- Don't read your testimony. Be sure to memorize it before you give it. This will help you know if it's under 3 minutes as well.
- Don't be preachy. Be sensitive to your audience. It doesn't mean you water down anything, but be aware of your audience.

Writing tips:

- Begin with an attention-getting sentence or story.
- Be positive from start to finish.
- Be accurate, but remember that you're not necessarily to give a play-by-play account of your life and conversion. The point is you're communicating what God has done in your life and the Gospel.
- Edit and rewrite and needed.
- Write a closing that provides a finished and logical conclusion.
- Consider weaving your story around a theme.
- Try to write as you would speak.

Evaluate:

- Practice giving it with a roommate or your Bible study leader.
- Ask: Does my testimony express assurance that I know I have eternal life?
- Ask: Have I clearly communicated how a person can receive Christ?
- Is it around 2 ½ -3 minutes?
- Ask: Could someone who has never heard of God or Jesus or ever been to church understand what I'm talking about? (This is the #1 mistake Christians often make. They are so used to their own language that they are unable to communicate with a non-Christian. This doesn't mean we talk down to anyone, but it's important to remember that words like saved, sin, church, and even forgiven can either be hot buttons for people or words that have lost their positive meaning over the years. Put yourself in the shoes of the non-Christian, and write from that perspective.