

Ev221 Sharing Your Spiritual Journey

Lesson Ev221-22 Methods: Telling Your Story

Have you ever noticed; when someone is telling their own salvation story, people tend to listen closely? They want to know how the person made this decision. One of the most powerful ways you can spread the good news is to share your personal testimony of accepting Christ. The word ‘testimony’ has its roots in a word that means ‘martyr’ or ‘sacrifice.’ ‘To testify’ is to explain your conversion encounter, no matter the cost. You might share what occurred before, during, and after you committed your life to Christ. What follows are some Bible accounts of the effective use of testimony:

1. *Consider the testimony of a rejected woman.* The Gospel of John tells about a Samaritan woman Jesus encountered at a well. During their conversation he discusses her beliefs about worship. He tells her he knows she has been rejected by five husbands and is living with yet another man. Yet she is the first person to whom Christ reveals that he is the Messiah. His words astound her.

John says, “Leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ‘Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?’” He goes on to tell us: “Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony ... they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers” (John 4:28-41). This is a powerful story of the fruit of one person’s testimony

2. *Consider the testimony of an outcast man.* Another Bible story that shows the power of testimony to bring people to Christ is that of the Gadarene demoniac. The man was so filled with unclean spirits that he ran among the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones. Seeing Jesus, he ran to him and fell on his knees. He confessed to being filled with thousands of demons.

After the man was delivered by Jesus, the townspeople came and saw the man sitting there—dressed and in his right mind. They were afraid. The man begged to go with Jesus in the boat, but Jesus told him, “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” So the man went away and began to tell in the ten cities how much Jesus had done for him. All the people were amazed (Mark 5:5-20). An outcast delivered from demons had a testimony that brought many to faith in a ten-city area.

3. *Consider the testimony of the apostle Paul.* When Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, he was tried before the governor, Felix. Then he waited two years before the next governor, Festus, heard his case. Finally King Agrippa heard him, before sending him to Caesar. When he was allowed to speak, Paul told his story—his testimony. It had three parts. He told of his life before Christ. He recounted his salvation event and then described his life after meeting the risen Lord.

As a child, he had conformed to the strictest sect of Jewish religion, living as a Pharisee. He claimed that it was because of his hope in the resurrection that he was being accused by the Jews. He described how he had thought he ought to do all he could to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. He had done that in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests he had put many of the Lord’s people in prison. When they had been put to death, he cast his vote against them. Paul

had gone from one synagogue to another to have believers punished, and had tried to force them to blaspheme. He had been so obsessed with persecuting them, that he even hunted them down in foreign cities (Acts 26:4-11).

According to Paul's personal account of his life before Christ, he may have struggled with spiritual pride as a Pharisee. His religious zeal had led to hatred not love. His unbelief had caused him to persecute those who believed differently.

Next Paul described his salvation encounter with the Lord:

On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. About noon, King Agrippa, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads."

Then I asked, "Who are you, Lord?"

"I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," the Lord replied. "Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." (Acts 26:12-18).

How were Paul's inward needs met in his encounter with the Lord? His spiritual pride was humbled. He was forced to ask, "Who are you Lord?" Jesus turned his heart from hatred to love and gave his life purpose, to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. He was transformed from persecutor to preacher.

Paul continued his story, describing the change that took place after he accepted Christ.

So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and demonstrate their repentance by their deeds. That is why some Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. But God has helped me to this very day; so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen— that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to his own people and to the Gentiles (Acts 26:19-23).

His conversion resulted in obedience to Jesus as the Lord of his life. He became an effective missionary-evangelist and church planter. He was able to testify to small and great alike and his letters comprise 13 books of the New Testament.

Based on Paul's example, a person should share three aspects of their testimony: before, during, and after their conversion experience.

- First, explain what the need was in your life that brought you to Christ. Maybe you were bound by sin, or lacked security, peace, love, purpose, or acceptance.
- Second, describe what happened in your conversion. Who was involved? When and where did it occur? How did it come about?
- Third, explain how your inward needs were met by Christ and how that has changed your life. Speak about the change using common words everyone can understand. To conclude, tell how God has met other needs and given you an assurance of salvation. If you sense that the other person is ready, invite them to accept Christ and pray with them.

This lesson is **important** because it explains how to share your story of meeting Jesus. It is based on the apostle Paul's testimony found in the Book of Acts. Your salvation story has power to overcome the devil and challenge people to receive Christ.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that you should share the story of your life before, during, and after your encounter with Christ. It will challenge others to make their own commitment to him.

Review Questions

1. What is a personal testimony? [Pause 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you answered, "Your personal testimony is the story of your life before, during, and after you met Jesus," you answered correctly.

2. Name two Bible stories that illustrate the power of personal testimony to bring people to Christ? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, "The story of how the woman at the well testifying to her village in John 4, and the story of the Gadarene demoniac in Mark 5, testified to ten cities," you are right.

3. What are the key areas concerning your personal testimony that you should address in sharing with others? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, "First, explain what the need was in your life that brought you to Christ, second, describe the circumstances of your conversion, and third, explain how your needs were met by Christ and how your life changed," you are correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to the scripture passages about Paul's testimony a few times to be able to answer the following reflection questions: "Why should you share your own story? What points are essential to an effective testimony? What matters are best left out of your testimony? Why do you think it is that people are reluctant to share their testimony? If evangelism is a 'holy conversation and invitation,' how can you best use your testimony to invite people to make a commitment to Christ?" Meet with several of your Christian friends to discuss these questions.