

Testimonies

Introduction

One of the things that we have found that is very powerful in bringing people to Christ is a testimony. In John 4, the woman at the well went back to her town and told everyone to come and see this man who told her all the things that she had done. So, they went out of the city and were coming to Him. People were coming to Christ because of a woman's testimony. It was not just any woman; it was a woman with a bad reputation. In verse thirty-nine, it says, "from that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified." She had a powerful testimony and God used it to bring people to Christ.

(John 4:28-30) "So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men, {29} Come, see a man who told me all the things that I *have* done; this is not the Christ, is it?" {30} They went out of the city, and were coming to Him... {39} From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all the things that I *have* done."

In Acts 1:8, just before ascending to heaven, Jesus told the disciples that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them and they will be His witnesses. Witnesses are those who testify about what they have seen, heard, or experienced. God has called all of us to be His witnesses, or to testify about Jesus.

(Acts 1:8) "but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

In this session we want to take a look at testimonies. First, we will define testimonies. Second, we will look at some various ways our testimonies are shared. Third, we will look at some various types of testimonies. Fourth, we will look at some attitudes that hinder our testimonies. Fifth, we will look at some attitudes that help when sharing our testimonies. Sixth, we will look at how to prepare our testimonies.

I. Definition Of Testimony

The Greek word for testimony is *marturion* and means something evidential, to witness. It comes from the word *martus*, which means witness, record or martyr. In essence, testimony means that you have witnessed and seen something. It means that you are willing to give evidence under oath, sometimes unto death.

We enjoy a tremendous freedom in this country. We can share our testimonies without being fed to the lions or being put before a firing squad or thrown into prison. Many places in the world do not allow Christians to share their testimonies. There is a tremendous cost involved.

(Rev 12:11) ""And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death."

Testimonies are legal evidence. The Scriptures provide many examples where testimonies were used for legal evidence. John 8:17 and 2 Corinthians 13:1 are two good examples.

(John 8:17) ""Even in your law it has been written, that the testimony of two men is true."

(2 Cor 13:1) "This is the third time I am coming to you. Every fact is to be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses."

II. Ways Our Testimonies Are Shared

There are many different ways that our testimonies are shared. People are watching us and observing how we live, what we say, and what we do. It has been said that actions speak louder than words. Our actions are a testimony just as our words are a testimony.

A. Our Lives

Our lives are a testimony to others. This can be pretty easy. You don't have to say anything at all. Your actions are speaking loud and clear. Moses' life was considered a testimony. Look what Hebrews 3:5 says.

(Hebrews 3:5) "Now Moses was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken later;"

Frequently Jesus requested lepers or other people that He had healed to go and show themselves to the priest as a testimony. It was a changed life, a healed life that served as a testimony of what God had done for them.

(Matthew 8:4) "And Jesus said[^] to him, "See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and present the offering that Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.""

(Mark 1:44) "and He said to him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a testimony to them.""

One year while my family was traveling with me on the tour, we were all seated at a restaurant and eating our dinner. Karen and I had had eight children at the time, so we were a pretty large group. A man at a nearby table sat there and watched us for a while. Finally, he came over with tears in his eyes and said that we were a powerful witness to everyone. Maybe it was the blessing that we said before we ate. Maybe it was that all of our children were well behaved. Maybe it was the love that he saw that we had for one another. Our children helped one another. Maybe it was a combination of all of the above, but the man declared that we were a great witness. Our lives are a testimony, and people are watching.

In 2 Corinthians 3:1-3, Paul wrote that the Corinthians were a letter of Christ that was known and read by all men. Our lives are written testimonies that are being read by all men. Our letter is not written on paper or typed and printed on paper. Our letters are written on tablets of human hearts, and are being read by all the people that we come into contact with.

(2 Cor 3:1-3) “Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, as some, letters of commendation to you or from you? {2} You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; {3} being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”

B. Our Actions

Sometimes there are specific actions that we do that are considered testimonies. In Mark 6:11 Jesus told His disciples to shake the dust from the soles of their feet for a testimony against them, people who did not receive or listen to them.

(Mark 6:11) ""And any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake off the dust from the soles of your feet for a testimony against them.""

C. Our Words

Sometimes it is our words that serve as a testimony. Revelation 12:11 is a great example of this. They overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death. It was the word of their testimony. Frequently, we testify with our words.

(Rev 12:11) ""And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death.""

(Luke 21:12-15) ""But before all these things, they will lay their hands on you and will persecute you, delivering you to the synagogues and prisons, bringing you before kings and governors for My name's sake. {13} "It will lead to an opportunity for your testimony. {14} "So make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves; {15} for I will give you utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist or refute.""

(1 Cor 2:1) "And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God."

D. Written Testimonies

Sometimes our testimonies come in the form of written testimonies. I think written testimonies provide great opportunities to share with people when time does not allow you to share verbally. They can take the testimony and read it at their leisure. As a professional athlete, I took time to carefully write out my testimony. I had other pastors read and proof it. I had other skilled writers read it and give feedback. I had a color photograph on the front of the testimony. I had it printed on high quality gloss paper. I signed them in advance and gave them out by hundreds. They were great tools. I was not alone in this. Many of the other Christian golfers on the tour also had written testimonies. Some of them used cardstock, like the baseball cards, and had their testimonies on them. Their testimony was a much more condensed version than my testimony. My testimony had a prayer to receive Christ and it also had some instructions for new believers to follow to help them get started on their journey with Christ.

The gospel of Luke was written for a testimony. In Luke 1:1-4, he wrote things that he compiled from the eyewitnesses. The gospel of Luke is a testimony of all the things accomplished in Jesus' ministry.

(Luke 1:1-4) "Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, {2} just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word have handed them down to us, {3} it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; {4} so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught."

III. Types Of Testimonies

There are many different types of testimonies to give. Here are just a few, but this is not an exhaustive list.

A. Healing

Frequently, we see testimonies of healing in the gospels. In John 9, Jesus healed a man that had been born blind. The religious leaders were upset and fearful about it. They asked the blind man what happened and he testified about it. They did not believe him so they spoke with his parents and they told him that it was their son and that he was born blind and now he sees. They referred him back to their son because they did not want to be put out of the synagogue. They went back to the blind man and asked him again. He once again testified, "whereas I was blind, now I see."

(John 9:11) "He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam, and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight. (9:25) "He therefore answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.""

One year I was praying for people at the end of the service. I prayed for a man named David Wilson. He and his wife had been in YWAM. He asked for prayer for healing and I prayed for him. Nothing happened. I was in a lot of pain at the time in my back so I asked him to pray for me. He prayed and my back was instantly healed. People ask me how my back got better, and I tell them about how a man prayed for my back and it was healed instantly.

Many years ago I began praying for people with hiccups. I found that they would immediately go away when I prayed for them. We laughed and called it the hiccup anointing. But, many people saw immediate relief from hiccups when I prayed for them.

B. Salvation

Paul is a great example of someone who testified about his changed life. In Acts 26 Paul shared his testimony with King Agrippa and Festus. There are three parts to a salvation testimony, and Paul's testimony is a great one to study. Paul told about his life prior to receiving Christ and how he persecuted Christians (26:10-11). Second, he told about his salvation experience on the road to Damascus (26:12-18). Third, he shared how he has been faithfully witnessing and testifying since then (26:19-23).

(Acts 26:10-23) ""And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. {11} "And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities. {12} "While thus engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, {13} at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. {14} "And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' {15} "And I said, 'Who art Thou, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. {16} 'But arise, and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; {17} delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, {18} to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.' {19} "Consequently, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, {20} but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. {21} "For this reason some Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death. {22} "And so, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; {23} that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He should be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.""

C. Deliverance

There were numerous examples in Scripture where people were delivered from demonic strongholds. They gave testimonies of their deliverance. The demoniac in Mark 5 was told to go to his own people and testify about how he had been delivered.

(Mark 5:15-19) "And they came to Jesus and observed the man who had been demon-possessed sitting down, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the "legion"; and they became frightened. {16} And those who had seen it described to them how it had happened to the demon-possessed man, and all about the swine. {17} And they began to entreat Him to depart from their region. {18} And as He was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed was entreating Him that he might accompany Him. {19} And He did not let him, but He said[^] to him, "Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you.""

D. Prophecy & Words of Knowledge

The woman at the well told the men in the town of Samaria to come see a man who told me all about her life. Jesus had given her some words of knowledge about how many husbands she had, and that the man she was with now was not her husband.

(John 4:39) “From that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, “He told me all the things that I *have* done.”

In 1 Corinthians 14, we see that when there is prophecy and the secrets of an unbeliever’s heart is disclosed, he will fall on his face and worship God. Just as the woman at the well believed because the secrets of her heart were disclosed, these people have a testimony to share with others about how their secrets were disclosed. They have a testimony about a prophetic word.

(1 Cor 14:24-25) “But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an ungifted man enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all; {25} the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and worship God, declaring that God is certainly among you.”

E. Miscellaneous

There are countless areas to testify. There are financial testimonies. I have a written testimony of how God brought us out of debt. It is a financial testimony. I have a financial testimony about how we paid cash on a new 5,000 square foot home. I have lots of financial testimonies about how God has dealt bountifully and faithfully with us.

There are prayer testimonies, of how God answered a prayer. I have shared many prayer testimonies about how God gave us oak trees in our front yard at our house in Orlando, Florida. I have share many testimonies about the cocktail tree that I prayed for and received as a baby present when our son David was born. We have lots of prayer testimonies that we are able to share with others. We can and should give testimonies about the many answers to prayer that we have experienced in our lives. These testimonies honor God, build up faith in other believers, and water and soften the soil of unbelieving hearts.

IV. Attitudes That Hinder Testimonies

A. Fear of men or circumstances

Fear prevents people from sharing their testimonies or the gospel with people. We need a fear of the Lord rather than a fear of men. The parents of the blind man were unwilling to give testimony to the Jewish leaders because of their fear of being cast out by the Jews. The blind man did testify that God had healed him, and he was put out of the synagogue.

(John 9:22-23) “His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed, that if anyone should confess Him to be Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. For this reason his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

(John 9:24-34) “So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, “Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner.” He therefore answered, “Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see....Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. “If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.” They answered and said to him, “You were born entirely in sins, and are you teaching us?” And they put him out.

B. Holding your life dear to yourself

We must trust God with our very life and be willing to share no matter what the consequences. At Jesus' arrest Peter denied Christ. Later he repented and wept over it, and Jesus restored him. If we value our life more than fulfilling the commission that Christ has given us, we will not share our faith. If we find ourselves lacking boldness, we should gather as the church did in Acts and pray for boldness. The Apostle Paul is a great example of a man who did not take his own life as dear to himself.

(Rev 12:11) "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even to death."

(Matt 26:69-75) "Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a certain servant-girl came to him and said, "You too were with Jesus the Galilean." But he denied it before them all, saying, "I do not know what you are talking about." And when he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, "This man was with Jesus of Nazareth." And again he denied it with an oath, "I do not know the man." And a little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, "Surely you too are one of them; for the way you talk gives you away." Then he began to curse and swear, "I do not know the man!" And immediately a cock crowed. And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, "Before a cock crows, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly.

(Acts 20:24) "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, in order that I may finish my course, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God."

C. Ashamed of the gospel

There is nothing shameful about being a Christian. We are children of light. We are children of promise. We are bearers of good news, not bad news. People need what we have to share. Shame is associated with doing something evil or wrong. There is no shame in doing what is right. Shame is felt when confronted about something that you have done which is not good. You are ashamed of what you have done.

As Christians, we should be walking as children of light. We should be living morally upright lives that bring no shame or reproach to us or our Lord. Being in right standing with God should give us confidence to share boldly rather than feeling shame. We need to repent and pray for God's boldness if we sense that we have been ashamed.

(Mark 8:38) "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." (See also Luke 9:26.)

(Rom 1:16) "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

(2 Tim 1:8) "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, or of me His prisoner; but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,"

D. Apathy

The word apathy comes from the greek word apatheia, which means insensibility to suffering. Apathy means to have a lack of interest, concern or care. When it comes to sharing the gospel with people, if we have a lack of concern for others and their spiritual destiny, we have apathy. Apathy will keep us from doing everything that we can to reach them. Jesus addressed this issue in the account of the priest, the Levite and the Samaritan. The priest and Levite were full of apathy while the Samaritan showed concern and care. He was moved with compassion and went out of his way to minister to the man.

(Luke 10:30-37) “Jesus replied and said, "A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, and they stripped him and beat him, and went off leaving him half dead. "And by chance a certain priest was going down on that road, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. "And likewise a Levite also, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. "But a certain Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him, and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. "And on the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return, I will repay you.' "Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers' hands?" And he said, "The one who showed mercy toward him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do the same."

Paul showed a care and a concern for the lost. It was the reason that he labored. He became all things to all men that some might be saved. His heart's desire and his prayer was for people to know Christ and become complete (mature) in Christ.

(Rom 10:1) “Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.”

(Col 1:28-29) “And we proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.”

V. Attitudes That Help When Sharing A Testimony

A. Be Sincere

We must be careful to be truthful and sincere when sharing a testimony. Don't try to help by embellishing a testimony. People will be more turned off by that, so we must be honest and sincere. By being truthful and sincere, we gain credibility with people. In 1 Timothy 1:5, Paul said that their goal was love from a sincere faith.

(1 Tim 1:5) “But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

B. Be Humble

Our testimonies are not about us; they are about God, and what He has done. One man told me that he did not have much of a testimony to share because he was never a drug addict, or into some other “big” sin. He received Christ as a young boy and had followed Christ most of his life. He has a wonderful testimony. He recognized that he needed Christ at a very early age and God has been preparing this man to be a leader in the church. Our testimonies are not better if we had a more wicked lifestyle. Our testimonies are not about how bad we were, but how good God is. We have to be humble when sharing our testimonies.

C. Be Bold

The early church prayed for boldness so that they would not be afraid to share their testimonies. We saw that the Greek word for testify was *marturo*, which meant to testify unto death. In the face of death, based on your testimony, you need faith and boldness. So, the early church prayed for boldness.

(Acts 4:29 KJV) “And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word.”

Even the Apostle Paul asked the church to pray for him to have boldness. He was in prison with chains on his feet when he wrote and asked them to pray for him to have boldness. Paul was already bold, but he wanted even more boldness in sharing the gospel with people.

(Eph 6:19-20) “and *pray* on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, {20} for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in *proclaiming* it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

D. Be Careful and Sensitive

We have to be very careful about how much of our past we share. We do not need to share details about our former lifestyles. If we are sharing with someone who has struggled with drugs, our mentioning of some things can stir up an addictive thought pattern that can be harmful to them. Our words can trigger wrong thoughts, emotions, and desires in people, so we must be careful and sensitive about what we share. Paul told the Colossians to conduct themselves with wisdom towards outsiders. We must use wisdom and discernment about what we share with unbelievers.

VI. Preparing Your Testimony

A. Pray

Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to give you His words and wisdom. The Holy Spirit bears witness and testifies of Jesus Christ. We are to lean on Him and not our own superiority of speech or our wisdom. Ask Him to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ as a result of this testimony. His testimony is true.

(John 5:32) “There is another who bears witness of Me, and I know that the testimony which He bears of Me is true.”

B. Write out your testimony

It should include the following parts: a) your life prior to the event, b) the events leading up to the event, c) what happened, d) what changes you have seen God work in your life, e) a challenge for your audience to respond.

In the example of the blind man who Jesus healed in John 9, he gave testimony of how God healed him, that he was blind before, that he can see now and that Jesus must be from God or He couldn't do the things that He was doing. He challenged the religious leaders to respond properly to the signs that God was doing.

(John 9:11) “He answered, "The man who is called Jesus made clay, and anointed my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam, and wash'; so I went away and washed, and I received sight.”

(John 9:25, 32-33) “He therefore answered, "Whether He is a sinner, I do not know; one thing I do know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see." "Since the beginning of time it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. "If this man were not from God, He could do nothing.”

1. Your life prior to the event.

Give two three characteristics of your old life. If you are preparing a shorter testimony, you may give just one. In my life, I was a selfish young man. I only cared about one person, myself. I had only my best interests in mind. I was only concerned about reaching my goal of playing professional golf. In a longer testimony I would mention that I was an atheist. By giving two or three characteristics, you broaden the audience that you reach.

a.

b.

c.

2. Describe what happened.

Give the circumstances leading up to the event. Give the date, time, place, circumstances, etc. A description gives details. It paints a picture with words what God did. We need descriptive testimonies. In my life, I was at a golf tournament in Duncan, Oklahoma. I was excited and unable to go to sleep. The Gideons had placed a Bible and a daily devotional in the drawer by the bed at the Chisholm Trail Motel, and the second devotion in there spoke about how you could have the peace of God in your life, so much peace that you could get to sleep at night. I got on my knees by that bed and asked Jesus to come into my life. Not only did I receive Christ, but I was able to get to sleep that night.

In the account of the demoniac, Jesus commanded him to go to his own city and describe what happened to him.

Luke 8:38-39 But the man from whom the demons had gone out was begging Him that he might accompany Him; but He sent him away, saying, "Return to your house and describe what great things God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him.

3. Tell what has happened to you as a result of this event.

Tell what changes have occurred in your life, (character, desires, goals, fulfillment, attitudes, etc.) In my life, I became focused on pleasing God, not myself. God changed me from being a selfish person, to being a person who has laid his life down for other people.

a.

b.

4. Challenge the reader to take appropriate action based on what he/she has heard. (What would you like them to do as a result of your testimony?)

C. Get outside counsel. Have a friend who has good writing skills review your testimony. Have your pastor read it and make suggestions to you.

D. PPRRR. Print, Proof, Reprint, Reproof, Reprint. Edit and rewrite your testimony. Check all spelling and grammar. Make sure that it reads well. Eliminate all words or phrases that unchurched or unbelievers may not understand. Make it reader friendly. Read it out loud to make sure that it flows well.

Small Group Break-Out

Sharing: Share a testimony from the past couple of weeks, one thing that you learned tonight that stood out, or one thing that you can apply in your own life.

Prayer: Pray for opportunities to share a testimony with someone this next week. Pray for 1 person in each person's oikos.

Homework: Write out a thirty-second testimony and a three-minute testimony. Be prepared to share a thirty-second testimony at the next training session.

Scripture Review Matthew 28:18-20, 4:19, Romans 3:23, 6:23, and Isaiah 53:6.

Memory: Memorize Ephesians 2:8-9.