

Mexico Outreach 2007

Sharing a Testimony

What's a testimony?

Great question! It's a lot of things. A testimony is...

- your spiritual life-story
- your statement of faith
- a map of your spiritual journey
- a photo album that reveals your thoughts about Jesus Christ

Why should I share my testimony?

The story of how God has or is working in your life is a huge part in the evangelism process. People can argue against the evidence of whether or not God exists or whether or not the Bible is the Word of God, but it is much more difficult to argue with a story of how God has impacted you. People love to hear stories and it is obvious from Jesus' ministry that God wants to communicate to us through stories. Being prepared to tell the story of God in your life is a great opportunity to help others into the kingdom of God or encourage those who are struggling. Also, sharing our testimony can be a reminder to us of what God has done in our life; this can encourage us in difficult times.

What if I'm struggling to share something that God has really done in my life?

It's okay if the "happy ending" to your story hasn't happened yet. It's okay to tell what you want God to do in your life or what you are waiting for God to do in your life. Have you ever stopped to think about the fact that if you are waiting for God to help you with something then that in and of itself is an act of faith? Don't be afraid to share honestly where you are at.

What should my testimony look like:

There are two basic types of testimonies:

- **Salvation stories** are stories of how you came to first come to have a faith relationship with Jesus. You can share what was going on before you had faith, how you came to faith, and what it means that you now have a relationship with Jesus.
- **Growth stories** are stories of something that God has taught you or helped you with in your life. These type of stories can include answered prayer, learning a lesson, or help through a difficult situation. Even if you are in the middle of a growth time that you don't know the ending to, it is appropriate to share what God has done so far or what you believe that he will eventually do.

Please plan to share your testimony with the entire group when we are in Mexico. If you are on one of the children's teams, you should have a children appropriate version of your story, but we are going to have everyone share their testimony with the Mexico team so we can celebrate together what God has done in our lives!

HELP! I don't know where to start!

If you need some extra help on how to go about writing a story about you and God, just ask... we have some worksheets and sample stories to help you.

Tips on telling your story

Pray

This is obvious but we can get so consumed in the task of writing and figuring out our testimony that we forget to do what is essential! Don't do this alone. Recruit at least three people who will pray for you before and during.

Do a heart check

Are you ready to publicly represent Christ? Be sure your heart is right with God and others. Anyone you need to talk to? Apologize to?

Know your audience **

Are you speaking to mostly Christians, non-Christians, or a mix? Be sure to use language that your listeners will understand. Avoid church lingo like "saved," "re-dedicate," "invite Jesus in your heart." What do those words *really* mean, especially to a non-Christian? (See the chart on the next page for more help and/or ideas.)

Watch Your Language!

Below is some common lingo that we use as Christians...but these words don't mean a thing to people outside of the church. (Actually, many of us Christians are guilty of using these words/expressions without *really* knowing what they mean!) Avoid the lingo and think of an alternative way to communicate what you're trying to say.

Christian lingo	Possible alternative
Saved/born again	Became a Christian
Re-dedicated	Got a fresh start; started over
Invite Jesus in your heart	Ask Jesus to be in charge of my life
Sin	Disobeyed; rebelled against God's way
Repent	Go a new direction; turn toward God
God's Word	The Bible
Fellowship	Connect with other Christians
Washed by the blood	God forgave me
Grace	Getting what I don't deserve; a gift

Write it out

Not only will this help you get your thoughts together, but it will enable you to begin remembering your story. Plus, if you completely forget everything – including your name – it's right in front of you. Also, be sure to type it out in a large font so that it's easier to read.

Get feedback

Before you present your story publicly, be sure to show it to someone to get his/her thoughts and feelings. Be open to comments so your testimony can be as clear and effective as possible!

Practice

Read it out loud AT LEAST 3 times. Trust me.

Keep it short: 2-4 minutes **

Always leave people wanting more. Also, your testimony may be one piece of a bigger teaching presentation, so be clear and concise. Try to have 50% of your story focus on the middle section ("how" or "lesson") with the remaining 50% split between the other two sections.

Ignore doubts

Expect your mind to be filled with lots of doubts and messages like, "Who do you think you are to share your story? You're such a hypocrite. God can't use you." This is a strategy of Satan. Fortunately, as a Christian, you don't have to be perfect to share your story (no one is perfect!). But you do need to know that God is with you and is cheering you on. And so are the people who are praying for you.

Keep your focus on God

Remember, it's God who has given you a story to tell. Be excited about your story, but be sure to give God the credit He deserves.