

Testimony Tips

Discuss – What's good about the Good News?

Motivate – John 8, 9

A well written personal testimony

- is a powerful tool in evangelism
- is easy and natural to use in conversation
- is proof that our God is alive and active in our lives
- gives evidence that cannot be denied or refuted

A poorly written testimony

- gets too long
- focuses on a sinful past
- is vague
- does not illustrate God at work in a life

General Structure

Begin with an engaging introduction. It can include

- thanking God for the opportunity to be with the host congregation
- a greeting in their language
- something you are enjoying about their country, a light/funny story about why you came to their country or a cultural blunder you made

Think of a testimony as a series of paintings that depict your life. Describe the paintings for your audience. There are two types of testimonies: a salvation testimony and a testimony of God's activity. If you really want to be versatile and sensitive to your audience's context, you will prepare one testimony of each type.

Salvation Testimony

- Your life, thoughts, priorities or relationships before believing in Jesus
- How you came to believe in Jesus or came to trust in Jesus daily
- Your life, thoughts, priorities or relationships since believing in Jesus

Testimony of God's Activity

- How God has made a difference in your life recently (how He's answered a prayer, met a need, spoken to you, led you on this mission trip)
- Invite others to seek this same God who can make a difference in their lives

Brainstorm

- Pray for God to guide you to recall the difference Jesus has made in your life.
- Take 10 minutes to write down ideas of things that could be included.
- Think of an occasion that could be described to illustrate the point (a story of worrying during exams to illustrate that you were a worrier). Use an illustration people from that area of the world would understand.

Write

Take 15 minutes to gather ideas into an outline. Aim for a 3-minute testimony. Avoid complex sentences, word plays, puns, idioms and Christian slang.

Practice

Divide up in pairs, preferably experienced with inexperienced. Give three minutes for each person to share his rough draft. The listener can take notes for evaluation.

Evaluate

The listening partner gives feedback on what was said. Consider:

- How did faith in Jesus influence this person?
- What did I learn about Jesus?
- Was faith in Jesus the pivot point?
- Were there any words used that a non-believer might not understand? i.e., saved, freed, “He” for Jesus and God (“God” is more generic, use “Jesus” primarily)
- Were there any negative comments about churches or denominations?
- Did it contain specific examples?
- Was it fresh and interesting?

Rewrite

Give appropriate time to write out testimonies word for word. A written copy is useful for the translator.

Be Sensitive

- To your *translator* – Make sure your translator understands what you are saying. Be patient if they have questions. It’s wise to make your translator look good, so don’t get impatient or make it appear that they are making mistakes.

Give your translator a copy of your testimony well in advance so they can translate it on paper if needed. It should be written double-spaced so they can write underneath each line. Ask your translator if they prefer you to read it phrase by phrase, sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, or in its entirety. Most usually prefer sentence by sentence.

Always remember to thank your translator when you are finished. Express your gratitude twice – a public thanks in front of the audience immediately afterward and then a private thanks later.

- To your *audience* – This may be the first Christian testimony some people in the audience hear. You are excited to be there and have a lot to share with them, but there is a limit to how much they can take in. Don’t try to cram your testimony so full that no one remembers your point. It is better to share a little and have people understand than to share a lot and overwhelm them. Remember that the most powerful testimony you will give is by living your life for Christ. Do not preach to your audience. Simply invite them to take a closer look at who you are by sharing what Christ is doing in your life.