



Preparing Your Personal Testimony

One of the greatest privileges for a believer is to present the Good News of Jesus Christ to others. Knowing this, it is beneficial to have a plan for your personal testimony that is flexible and easy to use.

1 Peter 3:15, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.

The following is from Self-Confrontation, a discipleship manual produced by the Biblical Counseling Foundation. ¹

The Apostle Paul provided a good example for you to follow when he gave his testimony of conversion before King Agrippa in Acts 26:1-23 (*this passage is printed in its entirety at the conclusion*).

Life Before Conversion (Acts 26:4-11)—*A religious life but opposed to God*

Conversion (Acts 26:12-18)—*A recognition of a need for Christ and a commitment to Christ*

Life After Conversion (Acts 26:19-23)—*A changed life and a witness for Christ*

Few believers have as dramatic a testimony as Paul, but all believers can follow the same general outline:

LIFE BEFORE CONVERSION . . . CONVERSION . . . LIFE AFTER CONVERSION.

To implant this testimony outline firmly in your mind, you should develop a "ten second" testimony that forms the basis for a more complete testimony. For example:

(Life Before Conversion) There was a time in my life when I was hopeless and confused;

(Conversion) then I had an encounter with Jesus Christ that changed my life.

(Life After Conversion) Ever since then, I have had a purpose for living.

Another example would be:

(Life Before Conversion) I always thought I wasn't that bad and would go to heaven no matter what.

(Conversion) However, God had a different plan to which I responded.

(After Conversion) I know now I'll go to heaven.

Life before conversion: Try to use descriptive words that a non-believer will understand which would characterize your life prior to knowing Christ (*examples: selfish, no meaning, guilty, troubled, without hope, full of anxiety, always trying to be #1, etc.*).

Conversion: Then describe your conversion in terms that a non-believer will readily understand. Phrases such as "got saved" or "had my sins covered by the blood" or "knelt at Calvary," while meaningful to believers, will usually not be understood by a non-believer. You might describe your conversion experience with phrases such as: "I discovered God loved me" or "I realized Jesus was God's Son" or "Someone told me that God had a plan for my life."

Life after conversion: Use words familiar to a non-believer to describe your life now (*examples: I stopped worrying. I found peace. My guilt is gone. I have found the only way to real living*).

Remember to keep your "ten second" testimony simple without going into detail. Details are reserved for your "expanded testimony," an example of which follows.

TEN SECOND . . . THIRTY SECOND . . . SIXTY SECOND TESTIMONY (EXAMPLE)

Ten-second testimony:

(before) "There was a time in my life when I had no lasting peace and joy, but someone told me that was because I didn't have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ."

(conversion) “After my relationship with God was established,

(after) “I discovered the reality of true peace and joy.”

The above ten-second testimony expanded into a thirty-second testimony:

(before) “When I was younger, I couldn't find lasting peace and joy in anything or anyone. My friends and activities could not fill that emptiness in my life.”

(conversion) “One day, a friend of mine told me how Jesus had died so that my life could have meaning and direction. I then realized that I was a sinner in need of God's forgiveness. So I asked God to forgive me, and genuinely believed in Jesus as my Savior, receiving Him into my life.”

(after) “Since turning my life over to Jesus, I have discovered that the Bible provides all the answers I need. No matter what comes along, God's peace and joy are mine forever.”

The above thirty-second testimony expanded into a sixty-second testimony:

(before) “When I was younger, I couldn't find lasting peace or joy in anything or anyone. Even though my friends and I always were on the move, it seemed there should be more to life than what I was experiencing. My friends even agreed with that.”

(conversion) “One day, a friend and I were talking about some problems I was having; and he explained that my biggest problem was not having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. He showed me that no one was perfect, which means that all have sinned, as the Bible says in Romans 3:23. And, I learned that the Bible, in Romans 6:23, says my sins had earned a definite wage for me, which was death. However, God didn't leave me in that position. Jesus died for me so my sins could be forgiven, and I could enjoy a relationship with God and receive His gift of eternal life.”

“All I had to do was to believe genuinely that Jesus died to pay the penalty for my sins and that He rose from the dead so I could have a new life. My next step of commitment was to ask Him to forgive me of my sins. My prayer was simple; I said, ‘God, please forgive me for my sins. Thank you for sending your Son, Jesus, to die for me and to live so I could have eternal life. Please save me from my sins, and take control of my life, Lord Jesus.’”

(after) “Since turning my life over to Jesus, God's lasting peace and joy have been mine as I have obeyed God's Word to overcome problems. I don't mean that I don't have trials, but I am now confident that God will help, guide, and strengthen me when problems come. Have you ever considered the difference that Jesus Christ could make in your life?”

¹The above is excerpted from the Biblical Counseling Foundation's 480 page in-depth discipleship manual entitled, *Self-Confrontation* (1991 edition). For further information on this and other biblical counseling/in-depth discipleship training materials, please write or call: Biblical Counseling Foundation, 42550 Aegean St., Indio, CA 92203 USA, Phone: (760) 347-4608. Fax: (760) 775-5751. For Orders Only – within USA: (877) 933-9333. E-mail correspondence: admin@bcfministries.org. E-mail orders: orders@bcfministries.org.

ACTS 26:1-23

So Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak for yourself.” Then Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense: ²“I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am going to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews, ³ especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently.

⁴“My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews. ⁵ They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion I have lived as a Pharisee. ⁶ And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, ⁷ to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day. And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O king! ⁸ Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

⁹“I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ And I did so in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death I cast my vote against them. ¹¹ And I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme, and in raging fury against them I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

¹²“In this connection I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. ¹³At midday, O king, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. ¹⁴And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ ¹⁵And I said, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ And the Lord said, ‘I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you, ¹⁷delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you ¹⁸to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

¹⁹“Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance. ²¹For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. ²²To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.”