

**A Vision for Disciplemaking**  
*Key Men's Conference*

February 20-23, 2003

**Preparing & Giving Your Personal Testimony**  
*Harold Armstrong*

# How to Prepare Your Personal Testimony

## I. Why Prepare a Personal Testimony?

Peter challenges us in I Peter 3:15 to " . . .always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope you have, but do this with gentleness and respect".

One of the most effective tools you have for sharing your faith is your story of how Jesus Christ gave you eternal life and how He has enriched your life. I John 1:3.

In Acts 26, Paul takes about four minutes to tell King Agrippa very simply, logically and clearly his life before salvation, how he met Christ, and his life after his rebirth.

The purpose of writing it out is not to memorize it and give it verbatim. You want to express your experience with words so the hearer can understand what has happened to you. The choice of the right words, the flow of your story, and knowing how to begin and how to end are very, very important!

One aim is to reduce an outline of your personal salvation testimony to a 3x5 card.

You will want to share as if everyone who hears you is a Pre-Christian. You never know how God will use what you say to encourage, give assurance, convict, or draw to salvation. You do your part and He will do His.

## II. Paul's Example

In the Book of Acts, Paul twice shares his personal testimony and gives us some good examples to learn from in developing our own testimonies.

The first occasion in which Paul shared his testimony occurred before a mob of people who were trying to kill him. An account of this is found in Acts 22. Paul's second opportunity to share his testimony is in the presence of King Agrippa and Festus, the Roman governor. This incident is seen in Acts 26. In each instance Paul divided his story into three parts.

- Before he came to Christ,
- How he came to Christ,
- After he came to Christ

*Note: When preparing your own personal testimony you will want to add an Introduction and a Conclusion to the three-part testimony of Paul.*

### III. Introduction

The purpose of the introduction is to disarm fears and to give a brief description of who you are, i.e., family, job, church, etc.

### IV. Before You Came to Christ

The objective is to arouse interest in your non-Christian listeners by causing them to *identify* with you.

An effective way to share these areas of need is to aim for a THEME (an open nerve) that is common to most of us. Just as an exposed nerve in a bad tooth will cause you to react when it is touched, so all of us have certain basic emotional or psychological "open nerves" that are sensitive to the touch. Listed below are some common THEMES (open nerves) typical to most non-Christians:

No peace	Depression
Boredom	Inability to live up to God's moral standards
No meaning in life	No purpose
Worry	Emptiness
Loneliness	Fear of death
No happiness	Dissatisfaction with life
Anger	Gripped by sinful habits
Guilt	Fear of God's judgement

One or several of these may have characterized your life as a non-Christian. You will be able to better identify with your listeners if you build the first section of your testimony around one or more of these THEMES (open nerves).

A. List two (2) THEMES (open nerves) that affected your life before you came to Christ.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Illustration - Specific incidents or examples from your life

a.

b.

2.

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Illustration - Specific incidents or examples from your life

a.

b.

#### Phase back or Overview-Flashback Method

If you came to Christ at a very early age, say so! It is exciting to hear the stories of people who didn't have to walk the path of sin and wasted years to find God.

It is often difficult to relate to the man in the secular world with a testimony of a person who has grown up in a Christian setting and embraced Christ at an early age. The person who has no concept of Christ may find no identifying points as he hears this "juvenile" sounding experience.

To correct this, we can use a testimony called the Phaseback Testimony to help the person who made a decision for Christ in his or her early years.

The Phase back Testimony first focuses on an overall picture of what the person had done in his life ----- such as schooling, marriage, family, job and present position in the world's point of view.

Secondly, the testimony will then phase back to the point of conversion at a young age, which demonstrates how the power of Christ affected the individual's decisions as he grew and developed his walk with Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, the benefits of conversion and growth can be identified either in self-image struggles, employment decisions, marriage growth, or child rearing.

It will be important, also, when phasing back to clearly communicate the message of the Gospel that began its transforming work in the person's life.

## V. How You Experienced the Gospel

### A. The Conversion Experience

This is the pivotal point of your story, and it tells *specifically how you received Christ*. Remember these points as you consider this section:

1. The Gospel should be brought out clearly enough in your narration that the hearer would know how to receive Christ himself.
2. It is effective to use one or two verses that were influential in your conversion or that clearly present the Gospel.

3. Be careful to avoid religious language that will confuse or be meaningless to a non-Christian - i.e. "saved", "grace", "washed in the Blood", etc.

Date and place of your conversion

What convinced you to receive Christ?

How did you come to know Christ?

What verses stood out to you at the time?

## **VI. After You Received Christ**

### **A. Your Testimony**

This section of your testimony should tell something of what has changed in your life since coming to know Christ: the blessing of sins forgiven, assurance of salvation, new meaning and purpose in life, or other ways your outlook has changed.

Consider the following suggestions:

Review the THEMES (open nerves) you shared in the "Before" portion. Think about how Christ healed those sensitive and unpleasant needs.

Don't present an unrealistic or idealistic picture of the Christian life. Remember that Jesus is sovereignty in control of our lives and with us in each situation we face.

Don't start preaching! Continue using first person personal pronouns: "I", "Me" -- not "you".

Referring back to the two (2) THEMES (open nerves) above, what happened immediately after you received Christ? (Was the change immediate or gradual?)

How did Christ heal your "open nerves"?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Illustration - Actual incidents to illustrate your point

a.

b.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

Illustration - Actual incidents to illustrate your point

a.

b.

Were there any specific Scripture verses, suggestions, or helps that caused immediate growth in your Christian life?

## VII. Guidelines for Preparing Content:

### A. Seven Steps

1. Make it conversational using informal vocabulary.
2. Say "I" and "We" not "You". People like to hear your story in first person.
3. Avoid religious words, phrases, and jargon.

Religious Words	Possible Substitutes
"Believe" or "Accepted Christ"	I prayed and invited Christ into my life.
"Sin"	Disobeyed God's law, turned my back on God, or rebelled.
"Went forward"	Decided to turn my life over to God.
"Saved"	Became a Christian or accepted God's forgiveness.
"Christian"	Christ-follower, real Christian, or committed Christian.

4. Generalize so more people can identify with your story. Don't name specific denominations or churches; avoid dates and dates.
5. Include human interest or humor. A smile will help people relax and increase attention.
6. One or two brief word pictures increase interest. Example: Describe the farm, etc.
7. In the before, the good and bad aspects serve as a cushion of non-spiritual material.

**Good:** "Wanted to excel"; "desire for education"; "concern for others"; or "hardworking".

**Bad:** "Selfish"; "inferiority complex"; "get ahead at any cost"; "temper"; "greed for money", etc.

## VIII. Conclusion

This is a brief summary of the difference between your life before Christ and your life after Christ, and provides an opportunity for an invitation to receive Christ.

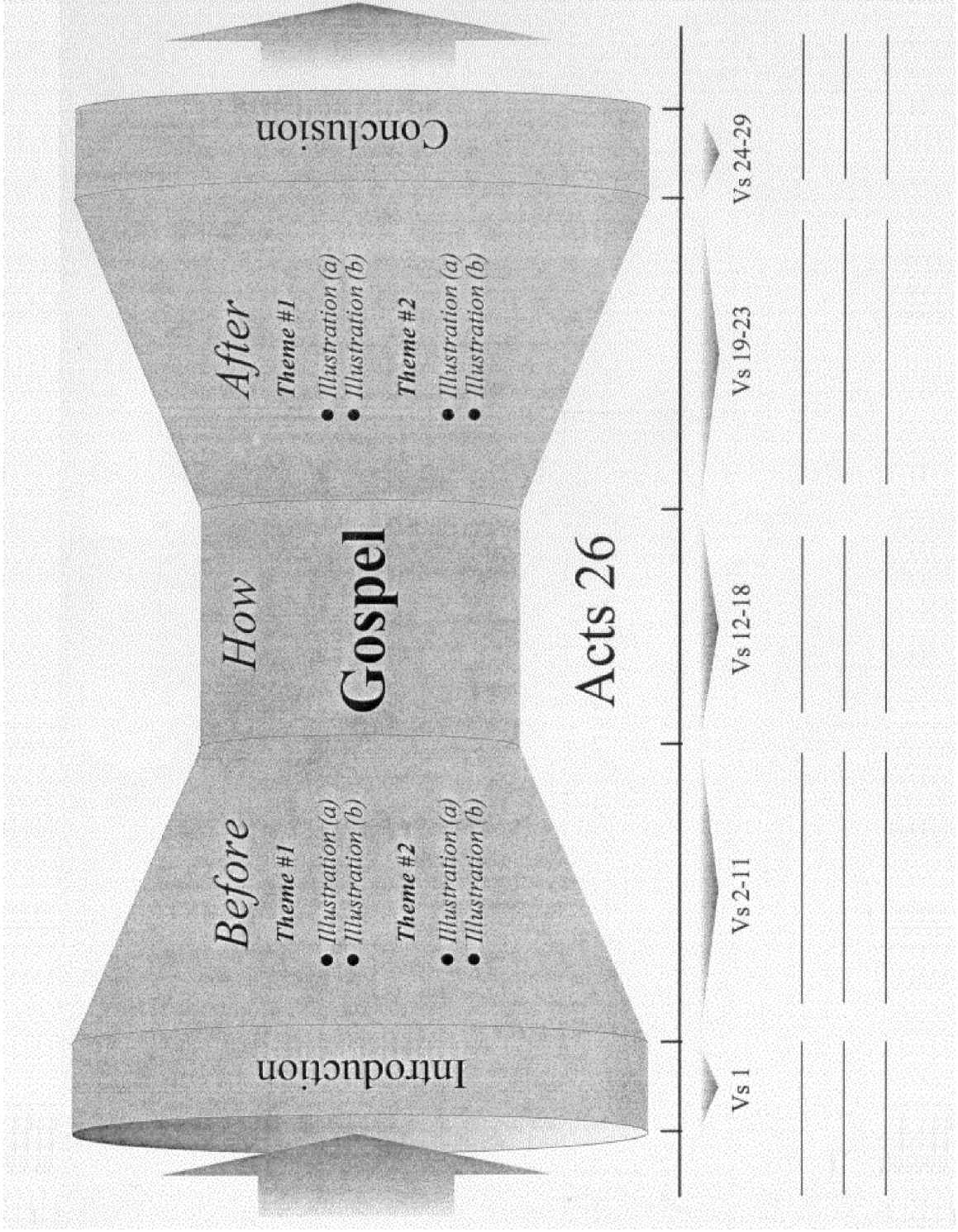
### A. Summary of Testimony Preparation

After you have thoughtfully considered these various aspects of your testimony, try to boil it down to 300 to 400 words that would equate to two to four minutes.

1. Read the testimony several times aloud until all three sections flow together and you are very familiar with what you have written.
2. Practice saying your testimony aloud to yourself.
3. After you have said your testimony several times alone, try giving it to another Christian.
4. Pray that God will give you the opportunity to use your testimony with a non-Christian friend or acquaintance. Pray for boldness to take the opportunity when it arises. Don't procrastinate!
5. Launch out in faith, even though you may not feel your story is perfected. Remember God the Holy Spirit is at work both in the heart of your hearer and in your presentation. Without God, the most eloquent delivery will be fruitless. With Him, the most stumbling speaker can be used to draw others to the Savior.

"And Moses said unto the Lord, O my Lord, I am not eloquent, neither heretofore, nor since thou hast spoken to thy servant.' but I am slow of speech and of a slow tongue. And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth? Or who maketh the dumb or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind. Have not I the Lord. Now, therefore, GO and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." (Exodus 4:11-12)

*Much of this material was taken from "Equipping the Saints" by David L. Dawson, ETS Ministries, 4400 Moulton Street, Suite D, Greenville, TX 75401. (903) 455-3782; FAX (903)454-8524 and also our thanks to Jon Brock for his assistance.*



Introduction

Vs 1

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*Before*

*Theme #1*

- *Illustration (a)*
- *Illustration (b)*

*Theme #2*

- *Illustration (a)*
- *Illustration (b)*

Vs 2-11

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*How*

**Gospel**

Vs 12-18

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*After*

*Theme #1*

- *Illustration (a)*
- *Illustration (b)*

*Theme #2*

- *Illustration (a)*
- *Illustration (b)*

Vs 19-23

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Conclusion

Vs 24-29

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