

It's your story, tell it with gentleness and respect, and with confidence.

1. Go and Tell. Jesus said go and make disciples, baptize, and teach. Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8. It's all about 'telling the story'.
2. What does Scripture say about testimonies and witnessing?
 - a. 1 Peter 3:15 and 16a. *"But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,¹⁶keeping a clear conscience,"*
 - b. Should not be ashamed. Rom. 1:16
 - c. Don't be hesitant. Eccl. 11:4, 6
 - d. We sow and water, but it is God that makes it grow. 1 Cor. 3:5-9; Mark 4:3-8, Mark 4:10-20
 - e. Who are we doing this for and how should we do it? 1 Peter 3:15-16a
 - 1) We must 'set apart' Christ as Lord, it is He we serve. Col.3:24
 - 2) It's an account of our Hope. Heb. 10:23
 - 3) We are to be Winsome. Jude 1:21-23
 - 4) Our conscience tells truth and the listener's conscience is sensitive to that. 2 Cor. 4:2; Luke 17:2
2. How do we get prepared to tell our story? Use Paul's model in Acts 26
 - a. The Lead-in, ask permission
 - b. The "Before", what you were like
 - c. The "How", what caused you to consider Christ
 - d. The "After", what has changed since conversion
 - e. The "Close", share what the gospel means to you
3. Simple facts to remember as you prepare
 - a. Your testimony is important, to you and your listener
 - b. Prepare with prayer!
 - c. Magnify Christ in your story

- d. Three main points, Before, How, and After
 - e. Keep it relatively short
 - f. Keep it to the point
 - g. Remember, God can use your testimony for His glory
 - h. No room for boasting or negativity Phil. 3:7
 - i. Use understandable language
4. Try to make your story relevant to the audience
- a. Look for openings to share
 - b. If someone has a problem you've experienced, tell how God answered prayer if that is the case
 - c. If God has worked blessings in your life, this could be an ice-breaker

5. Guide Sheet for Testimony Development

6. Choosing your "My Story" Format

7. Choose the Worksheet that matches your Format and fill it out

8. Draft your "My Story" from the outline from your Worksheet

DEVELOPING YOUR BEFORE, HOW, AND AFTER

Here are some practical suggestions for developing the *before*, *how*, and *after* parts of your story.

1. Before:

a. When non-Christians identify with your background, their interest grows. In "My Story", you can share one or more gaps or needs that characterized your pre-Christian life. Some of the common non-Christian life patterns or traits are:

- no peace
- boredom
- bad habits
- fear of death
- loneliness
- no meaning to life
- guilt
- something missing
- emptiness
- no purpose
- depression
- dissatisfied life

b. Non-Christians may ignore or try to get rid of uncomfortable personal needs. Often their "solutions" don't work. As you develop your story, you might list positive as well as negative solutions that you tried, avoiding being graphic or detailed about sinful behavior. Consider touching on one or two items such as these:

- Marriage/family
- Sports/fitness
- Hobbies/entertainment
- Work
- Money
- Intimacy
- Drugs/alcohol
- Education
- Wrong friends

2. How:

a. Describe circumstances that caused you to consider Christ. Perhaps identify events that led to your conversion. This may have taken place over a period of time.

b. Briefly explain the specific steps you took to become a Christian. If there is a particular passage of Scripture that applies here, you may want to use it.

c. Include the gospel clearly and briefly. The gospel includes:

- All have sinned (Rom. 3:23)- Christ paid the penalty(Rom. 5:8)
- Sin's penalty (Rom. 6:23) - Must receive Christ (Jn. 1:12)

3. After:

a. Review the needs or life patterns you shared in your *before*. How has Christ helped or healed those sensitive or unpleasant needs? What has changed since becoming a follower of Christ (for example, knowing that your sins are forgiven, new meaning and purpose in life, assurance of salvation, or other ways your outlook has changed)?

b. Conclude with a one-sentence statement about your confidence of having eternal life. The person you talk to will tend to comment on or remember the last thing you say.

Choosing your "my story" format:

Sample Formats and Worksheets

Read through the three condensed sample salvation stories then choose the format that best fits your own story and fill in the worksheet for that format. As you write the first draft of your story, you may find it helpful to refer to the sample story and its worksheet that you filled out.

- Format 1: Adult Conversion

You trusted Christ as an adult. You have a distinct *before, how, and after*.

- Format 2: Early Conversion / Adult Deeper Commitment

You need to evaluate whether the early-conversion experience was genuine. If you conclude that it was not, then you might use Format 1 as your model. If it was genuine, your life may have been characterized by spiritual immaturity or a lifestyle similar to people without faith in Christ.

- Format 3: Early Conversion / Consistent Growth

You probably grew up with Christian parents and have a strong church background. You might have very little *before* to share.

SAMPLE TESTIMONY FORMAT 1. ADULT CONVERSION

BEFORE

A few years ago I found myself lacking purpose in my life. Something was missing. Nothing seemed to fill the void.

I had majored in Electrical Engineering in college and got a great job when I graduated. I kept striving for one promotion after another, thinking that the next promotion would be the one that would satisfy me. But it never did. I began working longer and longer hours giving myself to my profession. This began to have a negative effect on my family. I kept telling my wife I was only doing it for her and the kids, but I knew otherwise. What started out as the “ideal” marriage was coming apart at the seams. It got to the point that I did not want to go home at night. “Happy hour” was more fun than arguments.

HOW

In my next job I was asked to attend an engineering seminar with David and Jack from work. David seemed to have a certain something that was missing in *my* life.

On the way home from the seminar David told me about how Christ had changed his life and had given him a whole new reason for living. Many of the things he said seemed to be directed right at me. He talked about having been successful in business but that he was always falling short of his goals and expectations. Then he said that the answer to his frustration was to have personally committed his life to Jesus Christ. He had admitted to God that he was living in disobedience and had turned control of his life over to God. He mentioned the Bible said that Christ had died on the cross so we could be forgiven for everything we had ever done wrong. I had heard this before, but now it seemed to make a lot more sense. A couple of days after I returned home I took a walk down by the lake near our house. I prayed and confessed to God some of the things I had done that I knew had hurt and displeased Him. I asked Christ to come into my life and take over, because I wasn't doing a very good job with it by myself.

AFTER

Well, there was no flash of light or earthquake, but I do know that I felt as if a large weight was lifted from my shoulders. Not everything is perfect now, but I do feel as if I have a whole new purpose for living. God has given me a whole new set of priorities to live by. But the greatest thing of all is that I know for certain that I have the gift of eternal life.

SAMPLE TESTIMONY

FORMAT 2. EARLY CONVERSION/ADULT DEEPER COMMITMENT

BEFORE FULL COMMITMENT

Not too long ago you could have characterized my life as lacking any real peace. Everything around me seemed to be in utter turmoil. Nothing I did would ease the tension in my life.

It didn't seem as if anything could fill the longing that was growing in my heart. I thought I could fill that void by getting involved in activities. I joined the health spa, took tennis lessons, and was involved in transporting our children to all their various activities. I considered going back to work part-time. Then my husband received a promotion and we were transferred to another city. If I had felt the pressure before, the move just added to the intensity. It seemed that the only relief I could gain was by taking tranquilizers, but that was only temporary and it scared me to realize that I was beginning to depend upon them for relief.

HOW

We had gotten out of the habit of attending church over the years, but the Johnsons invited us to go to church with them, so we started going. After we had attended for a couple of months, we decided to participate in a Bible study discussion group. There we met people who were fun but took their Christianity seriously. They began to challenge us to really commit our lives to Christ.

We reviewed some things I had heard while growing up: that we were all breaking God's laws and deserved to be separated from Him, but that God had provided the way to restore that relationship with Him. That provision was the death of His only Son, Jesus Christ. What I needed to do about it was acknowledge my disobedience to God and turn from it and ask Christ to come into my life as my Savior and Lord. So I asked Christ to take over my life.

AFTER

It wasn't until we got involved in that mid-week Bible study that I really understood what it meant to be committed to Jesus Christ. It was there that I learned that I could not gain inner peace in my life if I was going to try to run my own life. As a result of the Bible study I made a whole new commitment to Christ. The inner peace that I was striving for so desperately was finally there. But the greatest thing of all is that I know for certain that I have a personal relationship with God and have eternal life.

SAMPLE TESTIMONY

FORMAT 3. EARLY CONVERSION/CONSISTENT GROWTH

BEFORE

As a single person, I see other singles feverishly trying to fill voids in their lives. They are into travel; some try the bar scene, dating, high tech toys, sports, and even substance abuse. I also see married men and women (where I work) who are consumed with their jobs in extreme ways—often sacrificing their families in the process.

I'm involved in many of the same social activities as other singles. I love to play golf. I save up my money and take short trips overseas when the plane fares are low. But I have a contentment and peace that seem to elude many people. This new stability began in my life during high school.

HOW

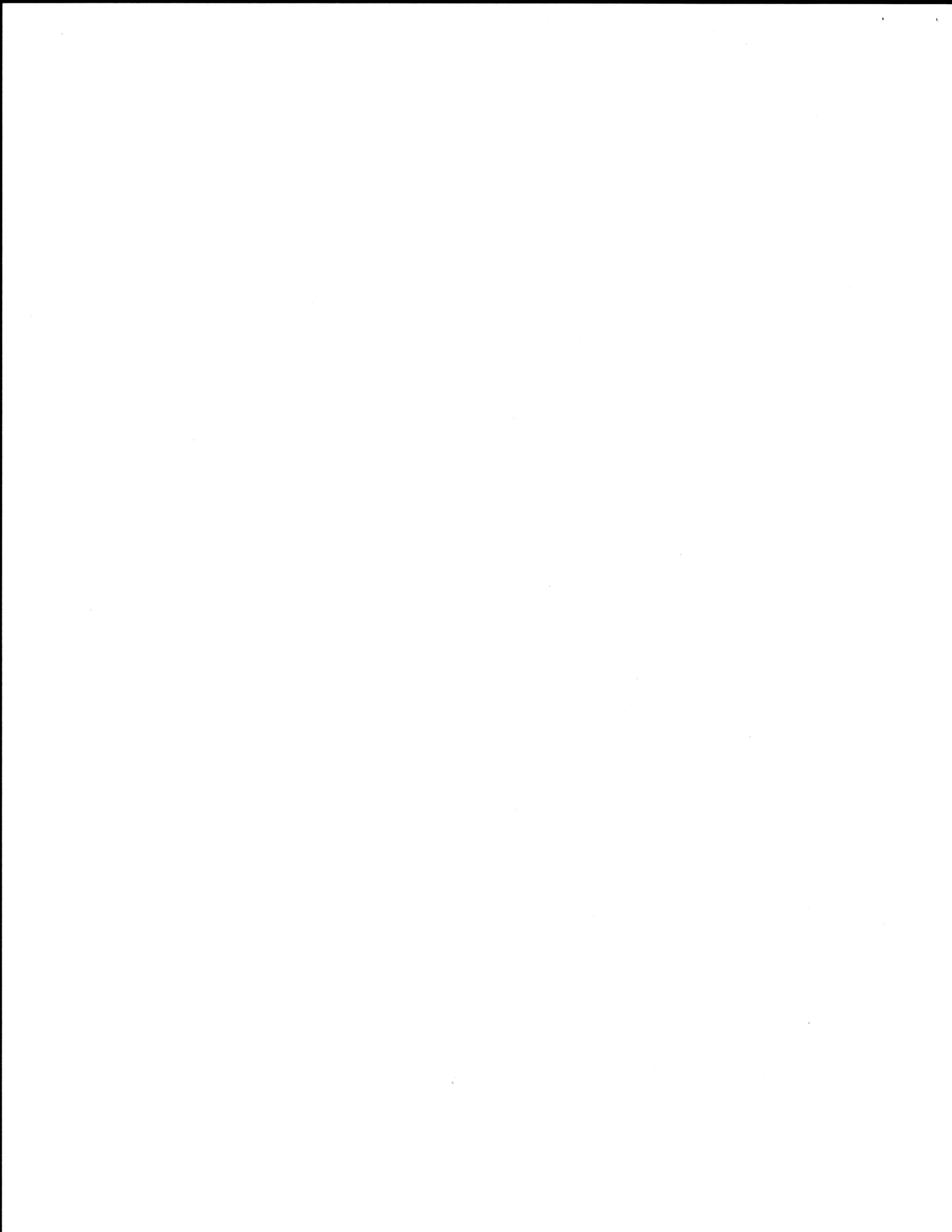
As I was growing up, my parents were very active in church. Because they were active, they figured that I should be also. So every Sunday, there we were. What was real to them was just a game to me. Then one summer I attended a church summer camp. This changed my whole view of "religion." I discovered at this camp that Christianity was more than a religion, it was a personal relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Some of the discussion groups centered around who Jesus Christ was and what He did. One day after sports, my counselor asked me if I had ever personally committed my life to Jesus Christ or was I still thinking about it? I said I was still thinking about it. We reviewed some key Bible verses about what I needed to do in order to become a real Christian. From the Bible I saw that I had done things wrong and that the penalty was eternal death! I saw how Christ had died on the cross to set me free from that penalty. I said a prayer right there and committed my life to Jesus Christ.

AFTER

As I grew physically and mentally, I also grew spiritually. I find that when I try to do things my way and leave God out of the picture, I have the same struggles as everyone else. But when I let Him be in control, I experience a peace that can only come from Him.

The stability I am experiencing through my relationship with God has impacted my job performance in positive ways and it has helped me to be less self-centered. But the greatest thing of all is that I know for certain that I have eternal life.



AFTER:

1. Give an example of how Christ met or is currently meeting your deep inner needs.

2. End with a statement to the effect that you know for certain that you have eternal life.

After you have filled in the Testimony Worksheet and are ready to start writing you may find it difficult to know how to begin. The following examples may trigger some ideas for you:

- A few years ago I found myself lacking (deep inner need) in my life. (Develop the inner need.) I tried to meet that need by (develop the unsatisfactory solutions).
- A search for (deep inner need) would be the way you could have described my life not too long ago. (Develop the inner need.) I kept (develop the unsatisfactory solutions), but those things did not work.
- At one point in my life I was searching for (deep inner need), but nothing I did would satisfy that need. I tried (develop the unsatisfactory solutions).
- Not too long ago you could have characterized my life as/by (deep inner need). (Develop the inner need.) The things I tried did not help. (Develop the unsatisfactory solutions.)

TESTIMONY WORK SHEET
FORMAT 2: EARLY CONVERSION/ADULT DEEPER COMMITMENT

Below is a list of questions for an Early Conversion/Adult Deeper Commitment testimony. Jot down thoughts under each question. This will give you a basis from which to write sentences and paragraphs about your own experience as you prepare your first draft.

BEFORE:

1. What was a deep inner need you were trying to fill?

2. Give some examples of how you tried to fill that inner need through unsatisfactory solutions.

HOW:

1. Briefly describe the situation in which you made a deeper commitment in Christ.

2. Refer to your conversion experience. State how you trusted Christ. Briefly include the gospel.

AFTER:

1. State how Christ is currently meeting your deep inner needs.

2. End with a statement to the effect that you know for certain that you have eternal life.

After you have filled in the Testimony Worksheet and are ready to start writing, you may find it difficult to know how to begin. The following examples may trigger some ideas for you.

- A few years ago I found myself lacking (deep inner need) in my life. (Develop the inner need.) I tried to meet that need by (develop the unsatisfactory solutions).
- A search for (deep inner need) would be the way you could have described my life not too long ago. (Develop the inner need.) I kept (develop the unsatisfactory solutions), but those things did not work.
- At one point in my life I was searching for (deep inner need), but nothing I did would satisfy that need. I tried (develop the unsatisfactory solutions).
- Not too long ago you could have characterized my life as/by (deep inner need). (Develop the inner need.) The things I tried did not help. (Develop the unsatisfactory solutions.)

AFTER:

1. Illustrate how Christ met or is meeting your deep inner needs.

2. End with a statement to the effect that you know for certain that you have eternal life.

After you have filled in the Testimony Worksheet and are ready to start writing, you may find it difficult to know how to begin. The following examples may trigger some ideas for you.

- As I look around me I see people lacking (deep inner need) in their lives. (Develop the deep inner need.) They try to fill that void or those needs by (develop unsatisfactory solutions).
- I feel that many people are searching for (deep inner need). (Develop deep inner need.) They try many things to meet their need, such as (develop unsatisfactory solutions).