

# Preparing Your Personal Salvation Testimony

*but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.*

1 Peter 3:15

One reason God has saved you is so that you might be used as His ambassador to tell others of the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. You need to be able and ready to "tell your story" of how God led you from spiritual and eternal death to spiritual and eternal life!

**The Primary Purpose of Any Testimony** is to give glory to God for His faithfulness in meeting your need. A salvation testimony concerns the circumstances God used to meet your need for eternal life in Christ. Other testimonies might be about how God met other physical, emotional or spiritual needs. Your testimony may include people that God used in your life, *but everyone who hears your testimony should be impressed first and foremost with God's faithfulness - He should receive the glory!*

Additionally, in the case of a salvation testimony, any unsaved persons hearing it should, if they are listening, understand and relate to how they might be saved. Your testimony should emphasize the circumstances unique to your salvation, but it should also communicate the basic facts necessary for anyone to understand the gospel and receive Christ for himself or herself!

## Guidelines for preparing your salvation testimony:

### 1. Length

Circumstances will dictate how much detail, and thus how long, you take to share your salvation testimony. You should be prepared to give a short, medium and full-length version, depending on the occasion. Most people error to the extremes: either too short to be clear concerning the gospel message or too long because of excessive description of circumstances. Most testimonies that are too long are really testimonies that go beyond a salvation testimony. Remember your purpose! If it is supposed to be only a salvation testimony then keep it that way!

### 2. Outline

Paul's testimony in Acts 26 can serve as a good model:

Lead-in	Verses 2-3
Before	Verses 4-11
How	Verses 12-20
After	Verses 21-23
Close	Verses 24-29

The lead-in and close that you will use will depend on the particular circumstances you are in. The "meat" of your testimony is the before, how and after portions.

**Before:**

Describe the circumstances that characterized your life *before* your salvation *as they relate to what God used to eventually bring you to salvation in Christ.*

Describe what caused you to consider your need for Christ in your life.

**How:**

What realization did you come to that finally motivated you to receive Christ?

Describe the specific circumstances concerning how you received Christ. Describe those circumstances that brought you to the point of conviction of your separation from God (sin and its consequences), a desire to turn to God for a solution, realization that God's solution was in Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection, and, finally, receiving salvation by the grace of God through your placing your faith in Christ.

**Caution:** although God may have used circumstances such as lack of peace, loneliness, discontentment, financial or marital problems, etc., you must be careful not to leave the impression that Christ is a merely a temporal "problem solver" rather than a Savior to those who recognize that they are separated from God because of their sin and who want to be reconciled to Him.

**After:**

Describe, briefly, how your coming to Christ has changed your life. Give some examples of the what God has done after you received Jesus Christ as your Savior.

3. General Guidelines

Make it conversational. Use informal and personal language.

Share, don't preach. Say "I" and "me," not "you."

Avoid "Christian jargon," especially when your audience includes non-Christians. E.g.

<u>Avoid</u>	<u>Use Instead</u>
Saved, born again	Became a real Christian
washed in the blood of Jesus	Forgiven, restored, made a part of God's family, accepted by God
faith, believe	trusted or relied
went forward	responded to God's invitation to receive Christ
sin	disobedience, rebellion against God, breaking God's rules/commandments, living my own life

Don't talk about church denominations or groups.

Avoid dogmatic and mystical statements which skeptics can question, such as "God said ..." (if you use this expression, say something like "God says in His word to us, the Bible ...")

Simplify, reduce "clutter" and unnecessary facts.

## Special Considerations:

### **Early childhood conversion:**

Those saved at an early age may not have much to say about the "before salvation" portion of their life. People in this category may want to make their testimony more one of general thankfulness for God having saved them and given them early in life a realization of their need for reconciliation to God and His provision through Christ and His death and resurrection.

### **Can't remember a date**

Some people who are genuinely saved cannot remember a specific date or set of circumstances associated with their salvation. However, no one is saved without coming to a realization of conviction of sin, a turning to God for the solution and a conscious, cognitive decision to receive Christ. Don't mislead people into thinking that salvation is something vague that they may have experienced but don't remember.

### **Helping a very young child prepare their testimony**

This can be difficult because the young child may have many of the right words but not have a heart-felt conviction (which we cannot accurately evaluate). On the other hand, you don't want the child to think that you don't believe them. Help them as best you can. Avoid putting words in their mouths. Don't assume that they can't possibly be saved because they are so young, but neither take for granted that they are saved because they can say the right words - keep praying for them and examine again in the future whether they truly understand.