



HOW TO WRITE YOUR TESTIMONY

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Introduction

Keep in mind that a part of what you're trying to communicate is the fundamentals of your *personal* relationship with God. However, a part of the challenge is the fact that your narrative (aka testimony) is the most recent chapter in a much larger narrative of God's redemptive work in the world. Roughly outlined that bigger narrative looks something like this:

1. God's broken relationship with mankind:
 - a. Perfect God
 - b. Not-so perfect (i.e. sinful) humanity.
2. Christ's sacrifice / offer to restore that relationship:
 - a. Living a perfect life we should've lived so that we might be counted as righteous.
 - b. Dying the horrible death we should've died so that our sins might be forgiven.
3. Restoration of the relationship through our:
 - a. Repentance of our sinfulness
 - b. Faith in Christ

Your testimony will most likely focus on #3, but it should also discuss #1 (How did you come to know there was a perfect God? How did the word "sin" even enter into your vocabulary so that you were able to repent of it?) and #2 (Who is this savior you're believing in? Why is he so special?).

That said, remember that you're writing a story – your story – NOT a book on theology. You don't have to include every bit of the above outline (that outline itself is missing some pretty important things). Volumes have been written on Sin, God, Christ, Faith, and Repentance. Don't expect to say everything about these topics in your testimony. Instead, just tell us your story as simply and plainly (i.e. don't use systematic theology words) as you can.

Discuss your early life. Were you raised a Christian? What did you understand about the gospel at a young age? Were you raised a non-Christian? What was your life like before you became a Christian? (Spend the least amount of your time discussing this section)

Examples:

I was raised in a Christian home. There was never a time when I didn't know Christ. My parents would pray with us nightly and "Jesus" was a household name (in a good way). I remember my dad ...

I entered college and was convinced that my purpose in life was to drink myself silly. One day I woke up hung over and thought, "there must be something more to life than this." I tried lots of things to fill the void ...

I never really gave much thought to the whole religion thing. I had everything I needed: a big house, nice car, good job, great wife, and even well-behaved kids. Moreover, I was a good person. I paid my taxes, didn't cuss, and even picked up trash for my neighborhood association occasionally...

Tell us how Christ first impacted your life. When did you realize that you needed a savior? How did God bring you to that realization? Did he use a specific person or conversation? Were there a series of events that led you to that conclusion? What was your response?

Examples:

I prayed to accept Jesus at a young age, but it was later – maybe middle school – when I realized how badly I needed him. I tried to cheat on my math test, and I was caught. It seemed like nobody was happy with me. I was convinced that even God was angry with me, but then I remembered how my Sunday School teacher had said that God poured out his anger and wrath on Jesus so that our sins would never count against us ...

Drugs, women, video games, I tried everything. Nothing filled the void. Nothing made me feel truly loved. I was depressed and even considered suicide. That's when I came across an open Bible in my dorm's lobby. It was open to John, chapter 3 verse 16. I realized that there WAS someone who loved me. He loved me enough to forgive me of all the stupid things I was trying to replace him with ...

I was perfect, or at least so I thought. I had never smoked, drank, or chewed. I thought that was what was important. Then by some fluke my ipod downloaded this weird guy named Elliot Grudem talking about the prodigal son. After the listening, I was convicted that I was the older brother – the one who was self-righteous. I was like the Pharisees – always judging others and never looking at myself. I was always thinking about how everyone else needed Jesus, but it was then that I realized I needed him desperately to forgive even this hard-hearted Pharisee.

Discuss a few of the ways that the gospel and your relationship with Christ have grown through the years. How has the value you place on Christ increased? Is there another specific event where Christ has radically broken into your life that you'd like to tell us about?

Examples:

Over the years there have been many lessons that God has taught me, and I'm constantly learning to appreciate Christ more and more. I used to worry that I might slip up one day and lose my salvation, but then I've read verses like the one that says, "He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it." Jesus didn't just die for my sins, he's sent His Spirit to work righteousness into me. I still mess up, and he still forgives, but he's also transforming me more and more to his likeness. Some of the ways he's done that are ...

Love was just one thing that Christ brought into my life. A few years later I was struggling again. This time it wasn't that I felt unloved, I had lost my job. It felt like I had no purpose in life. That's when a friend of mine reminded me that God was in control and that since I already knew He loved me if I didn't have a job there was a good reason for it. The next day I stopped moping about and started working on my first book, *The Purpose Driven Life*...

The amazing thing about realizing my sin was forgiven I suddenly found the courage to seek out sin in my life and confront it. Whereas before I would deny it, run from it, cover it up, now I could own it and run with it to the cross, knowing that I had a savior who wouldn't hate me because of it. No. Instead of the old feelings of guilt I expected, the more I learned about the horrible ugliness of my sin the more beautiful the cross became to me.

Discuss the present value of Christ in your life. Why is all this Christian stuff still worth it to you? How is Christ's work still affecting your life?

Examples:

These days I still struggle with feeling forgiven, but Christ still faithfully reminds me of my forgiveness through friends, family, and his word. Were it not for Christ, I don't think I could face the world, but knowing that he has died for me, makes all the difference.

Each year God brings a new challenge into my life and each day he gives me the strength through Christ to face those challenges. Occasionally I doubt that the strength exists, but then I am reminded of Christ. He took on the world, sin, Satan, and even death and he rose victorious. His strength is sufficient for any challenge I could possibly face.

I would never go back to the "perfect" life that I had. It was a fake, pretend life. My life in Christ is so much better. Even though occasionally from my perspective there are messes, I know that in God's eyes everything is going perfectly according to plan – a plan that will one day see me glorified with him in eternity.