

# Preparing Your Personal Testimony

**Introduction:** One of the most significant aspects of your baptism ceremony will be the opportunity you will have to tell your story regarding your relationship and desired future with Christ. For the purpose of our ceremony, plan on sharing the short (1-3 minute/1 page or less written) version of your story with Christ. Though it might seem fearful now, and maybe even then, you will be giving a great gift to the people who are there. I've listed some suggestions and ideas that might help you in the process of developing your testimony. Let me know if you think you need some help.

## A. Why share your testimony

- 1 It will give you a tool to use for the rest of your life.
2. It will help the people present at your baptism identify you with Christ in a very personal way and may open doors of opportunity for you.
3. People can't disagree with your experience. When you present the reasons Christianity is true, people can disagree with the facts, and present the reasons they reject Christianity. But when you talk about how Jesus Christ changed your life, they can't argue with you. A good testimony is a powerful tool to help people see the truth of Christianity as applied to your personal experience.
- 4 You can often say things in your testimony that would be offensive if they were stated directly. Compare these 2 examples:
  - "Kevin, I know religion is important to you, but you need to understand that all the religious activities in the world won't bring you God's acceptance."
  - "Kevin, when I got involved in church in my early years, my objective was to earn God's acceptance by doing good things. Gradually, I realized that all the good deeds in the world couldn't earn eternal life. I found out that Jesus paid the price for all my imperfections, and that by receiving Him, I became perfectly acceptable to God."In both examples you have stated the same truth, but stated in terms of your personal experience, the truth is less offensive.
5. More often than not, your story will pique your friends interest and he or she will ask you to give them a fuller account of how you came to Christ.

**B. Paul's testimony model** - Paul gives a good example of a personal testimony in Acts 22:1-22. He first recounts his hatred of Christianity **before** he came to Christ (vv 1-5). Then he describes **how** he met Christ on the Damascus road (vv 6-10). Finally he described what happened to him **after** he received Christ (vv 11-22). If we follow Paul's example with our testimonies we will have three basic parts:

1. **Before** - Briefly talk about your life before you met Christ. What barriers did God have to overcome in your life for you for you to see your need for Christ. If you trusted Christ as a young child you may want to skip the before and emphasize the after and your reasons for wanting now to identify with Christ through baptism.
2. **How** - Describe briefly the circumstances and key person(s) God used to bring you faith in Christ. It may have been a life crisis or a significant demonstration of unconditional love. If you can't remember the circumstances, share what God has used in your life lately to cause you to be willing to identify yourself publicly with Him in baptism.

**3. After** - Here you talk briefly about your life since you trusted Christ and of your desire to walk with Christ so that more and more you are doing what Jesus would if He were in your place. Authenticity is crucial here. Don't feel that your story must be all positive after you began your walk with Christ. Christians do face difficulties and pain. Expressing your sense of forgiveness and hope based on God's goodness can be greatly used of God to speak to others who are struggling right now.

### **C. Some guidelines to help in your testimony preparation**

1. Focus on key themes and highlights. Don't feel the need to give a travelogue or cover all details of your life.
2. Strive to make your testimony interesting. Everyone has something unique about their story with Christ that others would enjoy hearing. Use language that communicates the emotions you were feeling as well as the facts of what happened. Paint word pictures when possible.
3. Be yourself, be authentic. As you share see yourself as giving something valuable to others, not as hoping to receive something from them - approval. It will change your attitude towards speaking in front of people.
4. Avoid clichés and language that sounds overly religious. Ask yourself, "Would a person that never went to church understand my testimony?"
5. Some find that writing it out and reading/sharing it with someone helps.

**Conclusion** - Your story of how you came to faith in Christ and why you want to identify yourself publicly with Christ through baptism is an interesting, challenging and powerful tool that God can use in other people's lives. Share it whenever you can, beginning with our baptism service.

Initial Testimony Thoughts:

**Before**

**How**

**After**