

An Indispensable Tool Of An Evangelist: How To Give Your Testimony

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Stories can impact us like nothing else. Think of:

**Watching Schindler's List, the Passion of The Christ, Forest Gump, or even a Pixar movie.

**Reading a great book that you can't put down.

**Listening to your favorite song that makes you want to dance or cry.

**Watching the reunion of a soldier and family, who has come home after a year away from home and seeing his baby for the first time.

WE ARE MADE FOR STORIES

Stories move us. They can change our minds. They can inspire us. They teach us. They can even be an instrument that God uses in our conversion. We need stories to be told. We need to share the story of how God has worked in our lives too. This is even more true today. As Pope Paul VI once wrote:

“Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.” -EN, 41

A testimony answers the questions, “how has God changed your life”? St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. John frequently shared their conversion stories in their epistles. The early Christians did it as well. They knew the power of stories. They did it because telling the story of how they met their best friend (+ Lord & Savior), was something that came natural to them. Thus, it should be done in a natural and narrative way - in other words we shouldn't try to think of our own story as a formula.

Maybe you have an objection rising in your heart. Maybe you don't have a dramatic story to tell. That is ok. If you have ever chosen to put Jesus at the center of your life and had a conversion - then you have a story. St. Therese of Lisieux didn't have a dramatic conversion from sin to grace either. She may have never committed any mortal sins or been without the state of grace (after her baptism). But, she had many encounters with Jesus that deepened her relationship with him. Her story is her story. Your story is your story. It can be as dramatic as St. Paul being struck down on the way to Damascus or as normal as any other. The point is that you have a story to tell and that God can use it to impact others.

Unless you don't have a story to tell. If that is the case, then I invite you to choose to put Jesus at the center of your heart right now. Why delay the day of salvation? Notice, that I am not assuming that every reader of this blog has a conversion story to tell. I wish it was so, but we need to stop making such assumptions. As the saying goes, "never accept a label in place of a story."

SUBJECTIVE STORIES DO WHAT OBJECTIVE TRUTH CAN'T

Nowadays, we can't just assume that because we speak truth (even if we do so in a compelling manner), that others will agree with us. Therefore we need our testimonies to crack many hearts. The witness of how God has changed our lives does several things:

- **It provides personal evidence** - Your story is real. It shows that your belief is authentic and is evidence that God is real and active in your life.
- **It can cause important questions to be raised** - it can stir up questions in others.
- **It is hard to argue with it** - your story is hard to argue with, even if every doctrine can.
- **It provides a powerful story of God's power** - it can even be a way God offers graces to others.
- **It is non-threatening to others** - People rarely feel threatened by hearing your story.

The Bible gives us evidence of why we need to give our testimonies:

- Jesus is sending you, just like he sent the original disciples out.
 - "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and then you will be My witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth." - Acts 1:8
- Your faith should be shared with others.
 - "Reverence Christ in your hearts. Should anyone ask you the reason for this hope of yours, be ever ready to reply, but speak gently and respectfully." - 1 Peter 3:15-16
- The "objective" and "subjective" gospel can be spun together to form one gospel message. Your story is subjective. The story of Jesus is objective and we have written about about how to share it in [our last post](#). One thing you can do is to mix your story and the story of Jesus' Gospel together in one narrative. This is a great skill to have, as an evangelist.
 - Paul mixes the stories of his conversion and the kerygma in Acts 22:1-21, Acts 26, and Phil 3:4-17

HOW TO SHARE YOUR TESTIMONY

Before you start, consider these questions

- How has your life changed, because God is a part of it?
- When are times you felt God's presence, knew his forgiveness, experienced grace/forgiveness, or had deep experience of prayer?
- How has God helped you through your life? Have you felt comforted, at peace, fulfilled, etc?

Now consider these three basic elements:

1 - Your Life Before Jesus:

- Background - what was life like?
- Tell something good about your life, don't just dwell on the negative aspects.
- Point out something that was missing, wrong, etc, without Jesus at the center of your life.
- Be concrete - but don't give too many details that won't matter to your listener.
- Try to be relatable.
- Don't use words that others may not understand, unless you clearly define them.

2 - Your Conversion - an Encounter With Jesus:

- By far, this is the most important part of your story, so be clear.
- Focus on the moment of encounter with Jesus, your decision-point, and conversion.
- Describe what this time was like and what happened.
- What did you feel? What did you do? What did you say? How did you react?
- If your conversion was over a period of time (long or short), tell how things changed and focus on the major moments.
- Allow most of the time to be about Jesus impacting your life. Talk about him personally and name him. Drop the name "Jesus" frequently into your narrative.
- Don't teach!
- Don't judge your former life in a manner that is overly rough. You might turn off others who are in a similar place currently.
- Don't add things that didn't happen or exaggerate for the sake of a story. Your story should be honest. If it is simple, keep it simple.

3 - Your Life After Conversion:

- Be very clear as to what has changed. Give examples of how your life is different. What has stopped? What have you gained? What do you do differently?
- Don't make your life today seem like a fairy tale. Be honest about current struggles, but also remain hopeful.
- End with a simple invitation.
- God wants something for you too.
- Jesus can do the same for you.

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