



Communicating My Story

"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."

1 Peter 3:15

Your personal story is powerful. In a culture which often debates absolute truth, your experience with Jesus is undeniable. Those around you considering Christ want to see a real you, meeting a real Jesus, in real life. Take a look at Paul's testimony as it's recorded in the book of Acts and start to write down your own faith story. Try telling your story like Paul using the "Life Before", "The How" and the "Life After" Model. After you've finished share your 3-5 minute story with your coach for some feedback.

Paul's Life-Change Story: Acts 21:4-22:21

Life Before (Acts 22:1-5)

Paul describes what he thought and did before he became a believer.

Goal: to give specific, yet appropriate, examples of what your life was like (attitudes, needs, problems) before Christ.

Here is your opportunity to really paint a picture of what your life was like before Christ. How did you feel? What did you experience? What were your relationships like? Don't feel like you need to go into every aspect of your life, but pick one aspect that really summed-up your experience as a non-believer. Avoid Church-bashing or speaking unnecessarily disrespectful about others. Don't exaggerate, but be honest!

The "How" (Acts 22:6-11)

Paul explained how he became a believer.

Goal: to allow the listener to walk away with a clear understanding of how you became a Christian and how he too can trust Christ as the payment for his sins.

Ok, here's the good stuff. Now descriptively tell the story how you first came to know about Christ and how to have a personal relationship with God. Be careful not to use cliches and church language. Many non-believers might not understand terms such as "saved", "grace", "the gospel", etc. In fact, living in a strongly religious culture you may be using the same words that have completely different meanings! (For example: you may say you heard "the gospel" and the person across from you is thinking you heard about the first 4 books of the New Testament! Try saying "the message of Jesus" instead. Make sense?) Also, here's your opportunity to share the central gospel message in a few simple

phrases. Make sure the person with whom you're sharing could walk away knowing how they too could come to know Christ.

Life After (Acts 22:12-21)

Paul explained how becoming a believer changed his life.

Goal: to explain specific ways Christ has changed your life, to show that having Christ in your life really makes a difference.

Here's where you can share how Christ transformed your life. Try to avoid using general statements such as "I have so much peace now." Be specific. It is the Holy Spirit's responsibility to draw someone to Christ, but you want to communicate your story in such a way to show the listener that your life is different and more meaningful with Christ. Also, don't make it sound like everything's completely perfect now. (Because we all know it's not). Share how Christ meets you in your continual brokenness and how your life looks different with Him in it.

How to Prepare and Communicate Your Testimony

Primary Objective: to better relate the testimony to where the non-believer is.

As you begin your testimony consider:

- The level of understanding of spiritual words and concepts by your audience.
- The period of time right before your life really began to change.

Before I Accepted Christ (or gave Him complete control)

- What was my life like? How can I communicate this in a way that will relate to the non-Christian?
- What did my life revolve around the most? What did I get my security or happiness from? The non-Christian is relying on something external to give him happiness.
- How did those areas begin to let me down?

How I Received Christ (or gave Him complete control)

- When was the first time I heard the gospel? Or when was I exposed to the truth about Jesus?
- What were my initial responses?
- When did my attitude begin to turn around? Why?
- What were the final struggles that went through my mind just before I accepted Christ?
- Why did I go ahead and accept Christ?

After I Accepted Christ (or gave Him complete control)

- Specific changes and illustrations about the changes Christ has made:
- Why am I motivated differently now?

Helpful Hints:

- Write the way you speak; make the testimony yours.
- Practice this over and over until it becomes natural.
- Try to keep it within three minutes.

Getting Feedback

Share your story with your coach. Ask them to give you constructive feedback in the following areas:

1. TIME:

- Was it three to five minutes?

2. GOSPEL CONTENT:

- Was the gospel clearly communicated within the testimony? If not, what could be improved?

3. APPROPRIATE WORDS:

- What words were used that a non-Christian audience might not understand?
What words would someone who does not know English well not understand?

4. THEME:

- Were illustrations, themes or stories relevant and meaningful to the story being told?

5. OTHER:

- Are there other suggestions that could help the testimony be clearer or more polished?
- Was it appropriate for a non-Christian audience?
- Was it appropriate for a student in this culture?

6. PRESENTATION:

- Comment on body language, tone of voice, etc., that helped or distracted from the presentation.