

**E-Team: Personal Evangelism 1.02**

**Preparing Your Personal Testimony**: **1 Peter 3:15 (NKJV)** But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear. There are at least four important points to be made from this short verse:

1. Firstly, “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.” This simply means that you need to make your heart into a sanctuary set aside for the purposes of God. In terms of Evangelism this is of extreme importance, because, any duplicity in our heart will be revealed in our lives—and such duplicity can and will undermine our testimony. We need to remind ourselves that we belong to God 24/7.
2. Secondly, we need to “always be ready to give a defense” to anyone who asks us about what we believe.

Word Enrichment: Greek word, apologia (ap-ol-og-ee'-ah)

This is where we get the term “Apologetics.” Apologetics deals with reasoned arguments or writings in justification of what “we” believe.

This means that we need to be prepared to intelligently and logically present and/or defend what we believe.

1. Specifically, we are defending or explaining the “reason” we have “hope.” This ties the defense of our faith—not to what the Bible says—not to what our Church believes—and not to their preconceived ideas of what a Christian is; it ties the defense of our faith to our personal experience and testimony.

Why this is important: It means that you do not have to be a Bible scholar to engage in evangelism. Biblical knowledge is helpful; however, it is our personal testimony that is the reason we have hope.

Also, our personal experience with God is not a subject that is in dispute or needs to be justified. It simply is what it is. It is our subjective experience. It is what happened to us. It is what we know to be true.

1. Lastly, the sharing of our testimony needs to be presented with “meekness and fear.” That means we are sharing from a position of humility and not as one who has all the answers. I think that it also means that we are aware of our dependence on the Holy Spirit as we share. We cannot afford to come across as if we have all the answers and are not living a perfect life with no problems, no temptations and no understanding or connection to "real" life. (It is difficult to communicate with people if they believe that they have nothing in common with you)

**Do you have a boring personal testimony?** This is how many of us, who were raised in the church, feel or have felt in the past. We have convinced ourselves that our personal testimony is boring and we may not even remember a time in our life when we were not a believer in Christ. So, we struggle with the parts of our testimony; such as *“this is what I was like before I became a Christian”* or *“this is how I came to Christ”* or *“this is what my life was like after I accepted Christ.”* We may actually have no real point of reference on these points. (I will try to address these challenges when we start working on our own personal testimonies)

* So, how boring is your life? *I want you take about 90 seconds and write down two things about yourself. 1) Write something interesting about yourself. 2) Write something about yourself that most people in this group would not know.*
* There is something that connects all people together. Christian, non-Christian, white, black, rich, poor, Americans, Mexican, European, Asian, male, female, tall, short, blue eyes, brown eyes, green eyes… We are all living life on the same planet—breathing the same air—suffering through the same basic challenges—experiencing the same disappointments. My point is this: We can all relate to each other at some level. Therefore, the reason for the hope that is in you will relate and be relevant to other people.
* Let me tell you somethings about me that you might not know or have never heard before. (Most people assume that I was raised in a Christian home, always have attended and participated in the life of a church, have been faithfully married for over 40 years, and am a pastor; therefore, I have lived a perfect life and could not possibly relate to people who are lost and have a boring testimony)
  + I was molested by three teenaged girls when I was 7. (I was physically held down, although I fought, yelled and cried; and my private parts were handled) This impacted my life in many significant ways. (It damaged my relationship with my mother. It created a compulsion towards the opposite sex that lead to rebellion in my teen years. It drew me into a struggle with pornography) I’m not going to dwell on this—however, it means that I can relate to people who have suffered from abuse or have sexual issues.
  + I was raised in an environment of extreme prejudice. (In this case it was a religious prejudice. I understand why neighbors in Syria allowed their neighbors of a different religion to be arrested and killed; because, religious prejudice cuts as deeply as racism or any other prejudice that the Devil has invented) In 4th grade I was singled out for not being able to sing. This was the beginning of understanding that the world is not fair.
  + I have a tendency to be isolated and alone. As a child it was a defense mechanism for self-preservation in a hostile environment. As an adult, it is self-imposed defenses that the Lord is very slowly breaking down. The challenge is this—if you aren’t healed from the past—it is hard to make progress going forward; and, if you aren’t healed from the past—you will not be able to cope with the new rejections and emotional challenges when people disappoint you. What I’ve learned: 1) lower my expectations of others; 2) identify with the sufferings of Christ; 3) learn how to forgive; 4) stop continually asking, “Why Me God?”
* What I’ve given you, is a view of personal material that I can work from to prepare my testimony, even though I don’t ever remember a time when I didn’t believe in Christ. So, we are going to look at Campus Crusade’s teaching on preparing a personal testimony and I will show you how you can work in other approaches if you grew up in the church and don’t remember your life before Christ.

Preparing Your Personal Testimony

Every time we tell our story (our testimony) we give honor and glory to God, and He is pleased with that. Why?

Well, our story is actually the story of how God rescued us . . . saved us. It’s our eye-witness (or “I-witness”) account of how our lives have changed. It’s the story of His pursuit of a lost soul (you!) and the dramatic rescue to tear you from the clutches of your mortal enemy and bring you safely into His eternal kingdom. It’s the stuff movies are made of.

And that retelling of your redemption highlights His character. That’s what we call “glorifying God:” it’s giving Him the credit and acknowledging His work.

We like to think that because it’s our story, we don’t have to put any effort into telling it. We were there when it happened, and we’re living it now. But it’s easy to get jumbled up, flustered, off the point, and onto a tangent that can distract, bore, annoy, or confuse your listener. We want to glorify God and be listener – friendly. That’s why a little planning and practice are so valuable.

There are five basic parts to “Your Story:” the opening, your life before Christ, how you came to Christ, your life after Christ, and the closing. You should be able to talk through all five parts clearly and succinctly within 3-5 minutes. Let’s take a look at how to put it together, section by section.

1. ***The Opening.*** Identify a theme. What did your life revolve around that God used to help bring you to Him? Try to illustrate your theme with a word picture that your audience can identify with.
2. ***Your Life Before Christ.*** You want to paint a picture of what your life was like before you came to Christ, but don’t dwell on how bad you used to be or glory in past sin. Share only the details that relate to your theme, and give enough detail to show your need for Christ. This is not the time to give your resume. ***(Possible substitution: Share a crisis of faith or life experience)***
3. ***How You Came to Christ.*** Ah, this is it. Make sure you speak in such a way that the person you are talking with, and anyone who overhears you, can understand how you became a Christian, and how they can become a Christian, too. Give only the details that are important to communicate why and how you became a Christian. As you begin to work on it, consider what your life was like before you trusted Christ or you really began to see change. This is an educational aspect to your story, so that even if your listener is not interested right now, s/he’ll be able to make that decision down the road because you’ve equipped them with the right information. ***(Possible substitution: Share how Christ began “real” through a crisis)***
4. ***Your Life After Christ.*** Share some of the changes that Christ has made in your life as they relate to your theme. Emphasize the changes in your character, attitude, and perspective, not just the mere changes in behavior. And be realistic. We will struggle as Christians. Life is far from perfect, isn’t it? But what makes it different for you now? Be honest, and God will use your personal experience regardless of how “unspectacular” you may think it is. ***(Possible substitution: Share what you have learned and how your faith as increased through your experience)***
5. ***The Closing.*** Close it out with a summary statement that ties your story together according to your theme. You could close with a verse, but only if it’s meaningful and relates to the story you’ve just told.

Write out Your Testimony.  **HELPFUL HINTS**

* Write the way you speak—make the testimony yours.
* Choose a theme and carry it throughout the testimony.
* Don’t be overly negative or positive. Be truthful.
* Don’t criticize or name any church, denomination, organization, etc.
* Time limit should be 3 minutes.
* Practice it over and over until it becomes natural.