

The Power of Your Salvation Story (Testimony)

Paul's Two Opportunities to Share His Testimony



- Have you ever shared your testimony (salvation story) with anyone? If so, what were the results?

Every Christian **has a story** of experiencing the love, grace, and salvation of Jesus Christ. Regardless if they are “gifted” in evangelism or not, every Christian should be prepared to enter into spiritual conversations and point people toward faith in Christ (cf. 1 Peter 3:15). When normal conversations take a spiritual turn, it is critical to know how to share our salvation story with humility, clarity, and brevity. In Acts 22, Paul shared his salvation story with the mob in Jerusalem. In Acts 26, Paul shared his salvation story with King Agrippa. Paul's example teaches us how to effectively share our salvation story.

Central Lesson:

In the hands of the Holy Spirit, every Christian has a powerful SALVATION STORY that can have an eternal influence on others.

The Power of a Salvation Story

The Bible records several stories of people encountering Jesus Christ, who told others about the encounter, and a deep impression was made on those who heard. Many responded by receiving Christ, others did not but were moved and stirred in their heart about the saving grace of Christ.

- The story of the Samaritan woman (John 4:28-30, 39-42).
- The story of the man delivered from demons (Mark 5:18-20).
- The story of the man healed from leprosy (Luke 5:12-16).
- The story of Paul standing before King Agrippa (Acts 26:24-32).

Testimony Tumblers:

Bill Hybels writes: “...I've heard hundreds and hundreds of (salvation) stories... And I must admit, most of the time it's not pretty... I can't count how many times I've stood before a well-meaning Christ-follower while he or she stumbled and bumbled through some annoyingly exhausting, circuitous trip down Spiritual Memory Lane... All of us who bear the name of Christ must improve our ability to communicate our faith stories.” *Just Walk Across the Room*, pp.117-118.

1. Don't be **LONG WINDED**, that is, sharing a story that goes on...and on...and on... The attention span of most people today is very short. We must work on refining our salvation story so that we can tell it in 45 to 60 seconds. We need to make it concise and brief by writing it out in 100 words or less.
2. Don't be **FUZZY**, that is, unclear about what you are saying and never seem to get to the point. Be specific as well as brief. Convey one clear message of what Christ has done for you.
3. Don't speak with an attitude of **SUPERIORITY**, that is, talking in a haughty tone and looking down at others who have not experienced what you have experienced. Watch the spirit in

which you share your testimony. Tell it with humility. Convey a sense of brokenness over your past sinfulness and deep gratitude for God's grace and forgiveness.

4. Don't use **RELIGIONESE**, that is, vocabulary that non-Christians would not understand. Seek to use terms that people without a church background can understand. If you use religious terms, briefly explain what they mean.
5. Don't tell **WEIRD** God-stories, that is, strange & bizarre experiences that would be hard for a non-Christian to believe. Don't start your faith story with the strangest experience you have had with God. This will likely scare people off.

How to Share Your Salvation Story

1. Structure.

The most effective salvation stories have three parts: Life **BEFORE** receiving Christ, Circumstances of **COMING** to Christ, and Life **AFTER** receiving Christ.

Bill Hybels writes: “When you tell your story, the critical contrast to draw for someone is this: What difference has Christ really made in your life? In other words, what were you like *before* Christ, and now what are you like *after* you've asked Christ to intervene?” *Just Walk Across the Room*, p.122.

The Apostle Paul shared his salvation story in two places in the book of Acts (22:1-21; 26:1-23). In both accounts, Paul told about...

- His life **BEFORE** encountering Christ (22:1-5; 26:1-11).
- **HOW** he encountered Christ (22:6-16; 26:12-18).
- His life **AFTER** encountering Christ (22:17-21; 26:19-23).

2. Theme.

The most effective salvation stories have **one clear central theme**: “I was self-destructive...but now I am healthy;” “Guilty...but now liberated;” “Fear-stricken...but now confident;” “Despairing...but now hopeful!” **What is the one theme of your story?**

Bill Hybels writes: “Your simple, straightforward before-and-after explanation of Christ's work in your life can have profound impact. It is worth working on. It is worth getting right. It is worth falling on your knees every day to say, ‘God, if there is an opportunity for me to walk across a room, if there is anybody you would have me talk with about my story, it would serve as the greatest joy in my day.’ I promise you this: you will be absolutely amazed by the power of your own story once you have been diligent to hone and shape and refine it. When you communicate your personal faith story with sincerity, you will see supernatural sparks fly as God uses it for his glory and your listener's good.” *Just Walk Across the Room*, pp.130-131.

Central Lesson:

In the hands of the Holy Spirit, every Christian has a powerful SALVATION STORY that can have an eternal influence on others.

► Accept Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ► Attend a small group. ► Read the Bible this week & journal meaningful verses. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.