

WEEK 3

MY TESTIMONY: PART 1 (REVELATION 12:11)

A couple of weeks ago we began this series called "LIVE SENT" because sharing our faith is vitally important...

Judges 2:10 "And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel."

If we don't share the gospel through our testimony, how will people know about the Lord?

But, if we're honest, I think we can all admit that everyone in this room struggles (to some extent) in consistently sharing our faith. So we're all in the same boat. And since we're being honest, tell me some things that often keep us from sharing our faith...

- Fear of rejection.
- Fear of ridicule.
- Never been trained.
- Don't feel prepared.

That's why we're doing this series, so we can be better *prepared* to share...

1 Peter 3:15 "But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect."

Three things from this verse...

- **Being "prepared" means that you have to be intentional.** Are you prepared? If not, don't miss a single week of this series!
- **You're sharing about "the hope that is in you."** Does Christ live in you? If not, it's hard to share something you don't have.
- **We are to share "with gentleness and respect."** There is a right way to share your faith and a wrong way to share your faith.

So, how do we effectively share the gospel with others? There are lots of effective “tools” to help you share (and we’ll talk about some of those tools in this series). But regardless of the tool you use, one of the key elements of sharing your faith is your “testimony”...

Revelation 12:11 “And they have conquered [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony...”

You see, your “testimony” is nothing more than telling someone the good news about Jesus and how He has changed your life! You’re sharing how *His* story has changed *your* story. And you can do this with three simple steps...

1. Tell how you came to know Jesus.

John 1:12–13 “But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,¹³ who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Many people will say, “We’re ALL children of God.” But that’s not true. Every person is a *creation* of God, but you only become a *child* of God when you receive Christ as Lord of your life.

And notice:...

- **You don’t become a child of God just because your parents are.** (vs.13a) *“Born...not of blood.”* (not passed down from parents)
- **You don’t become a child of God just because you say you are.** (vs.13b) *“Born...not of the will of man.”*
- **You become a child of God when you are born again** (vs.13c) *“Born...of God.”*

The term “born again” (John3:3) literally means “born from above.” It’s something that is done TO you by God.

John 5:24 “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”

Have you received Christ and passed from death to life? If so, you have a testimony! Start by sharing how you came to know Jesus.

2. Focus on Jesus, not on your past sin.

What if I have graphic sinful details before I met Jesus?

Though our testimony can include specific information about how we came to receive Christ, you don't have to give graphic details about your past sins and failures...

1 Corinthians 2:2 "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

Paul could have shared graphic details about people he murdered before he met Christ. But instead, he said, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

You see, there are some things about *my* past that I have never shared with you or any of my former students, and I never will unless it's in an age-appropriate conversation that could help you in some way. Why? Because the goal of my testimony is to glorify Christ, NOT my past sin.

Illustration: Through the years, people have occasionally said to me, "You need to let me speak to the teenagers. My testimony will shock them!" When I ask them what they mean, they often focus on graphic details about the various sins they committed. They go for the "Shock & Awe." When I reminded one lady that the goal of our testimony is to glorify Christ, NOT our past sin – she said, "Oh, I never really thought about that. Thank you for helping me with that."

Rather than going into graphic details about her various sins, she could just say, "I struggled with addiction, lust, and sexual sin. But Jesus saved me, and I'm no longer enslaved by those sins."

If you have that kind of stuff in your past, you can still get the point across without using the shock and awe tactic. There may certainly be a time and place to share certain details with someone who is struggling with the same thing you've been through, but the goal of sharing your testimony is to glorify Christ, NOT your past sins. That's why Paul said, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

What if my testimony is boring because I was saved at an early age?

Remember, ALL have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Just because you were never caught up in graphic/sensational types of sin – that doesn't mean your testimony is less meaningful or powerful!

Your testimony can reach people who can't relate to wild and crazy sins.

Illustration: Me and Lesley

3. Tell how God has continued to work in your life after you were saved.

For example, a testimony could include how God brought you through a difficult time in your life, such as losing a loved one or some difficult situation in your life. You're letting people know that Jesus not only saves us from our *sins*, but He also helps us in our *struggles*.

Psalm 18:6 "In my distress I called upon the Lord; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears."

Don't just tell people how you were saved – tell people how God has continued to work in your life after you were saved!

So, how do we develop our testimony? How do we put it into words so we can share with others? Your testimony should consist of three basic parts:

- 1) My life before I received Christ.
- 2) How I came to know Christ.
- 3) My life after receiving Christ.

So, let's take those one at a time in your small groups and begin the process of *verbalizing* our story.

Small Group Questions on Back of Handout

My Life Before I Received Christ

Here are some questions to help you think through your life before meeting Christ (Give each person in your group a chance to share):

- **What sin(s) did you struggle with before Christ?** (Examples: pride, lust, lies, desperately seeking approval of others, etc.)
- **What did you trust in to find a sense of worth?** (a sport, material possessions, popularity, your intellect, personal accomplishments, etc.)
- **How did this thing(s) begin to let you down?**

How I Came to Know Christ

- **When was the first time you heard and understood the Gospel?** (During a sermon, VBS, Kids Camp, Youth Camp, a Connection Class lesson, from a friend or family member, etc.)
- **How did it make you feel to know that Christ loved you enough to die for you?**
- **When did you pray to receive Christ as Savior? What was your estimated age? Where were you when it happened? Were you with someone or were you alone?**

My Life After Receiving Christ

- **How is your life different now? Give an example.** Would your parents and closest friends say that your life is changed (not perfect) since you received Christ?
- **Even though your life is not perfect, how does knowing and trusting Christ help you each day? Give an example.**
- **Does your walk with Christ point others to Jesus? How?**

These questions may be helping you to realize that you've never received Christ as your Savior, and that's okay. It's actually a good thing for you to realize this. If this describes you, then what would keep you from praying to receive Christ now?