

Developing and Giving Your Witness Talk

Why do we need to develop a personal testimony?

We are commanded to be ready to give an answer for the hope that we have.

1 Peter 3:15 – 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.

We are Commanded to witness to others.

Mark 16:15 – He said to them, “Go into the world and proclaim the good news to all creation.” **2 Tim. 4:5** – But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.

We are Commissioned to witness to others.

1 Thes. 2:4 – on the contrary, we speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who test our hearts. **2 Cor. 5:19-20** – That God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. [20] We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.

We should be concerned about the souls of those who are Lost.

Romans 9:3 - For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race.

Matthew 18:10-14 – See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see that face of my Father in heaven. [11] The Son of Man came to save what was lost. [12] What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? [13] And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about ninety-nine that did not wander off. [14] In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost.

Preparing

A good witness talk requires preparation. People who look like they are talking without benefit of notes or preparation are usually the most prepared.

Most often, people take weeks to prepare, giving themselves time to think, pray, write, practice, get feedback, rewrite, and practice again. The following ideas can help you before you even start the process of writing:

- Know your subject matter. Whether or not you have been given an outline or reflection questions to help your prepare, be sure to find out the following information:
 - What is the main theme of the talk?

- What are three specific secondary themes or focus that need to be addressed?
- Do you need to tie the talk to a specific focus of event at which you will give it?
- What will the participants be doing before and after the talk?
- Do you need to tie the talk into the activities?
 - Know how long you have. The best witness talk is fifteen to twenty minutes long. You will have to make some good choice about what you will say and what you will not say.
 - If necessary, do some research. If you have been asked to talk about something that goes beyond your own experience, consult others, read books or articles, search the internet, and so on. For instance, if you have been asked to talk about Jesus and your relationship with him, you might want to read one of the Gospels so that you are familiar with the historical Jesus when you are preparing.
 - Reflect on the main theme. Ask and answer questions related to the theme that comes to your mind. Write down ideas and questions. Talk with others about your ideas. Pray! Tell God what you are thinking about and spend some time in silence to allow God to communicate with you. Let your ideas, prayers, and thoughts germinate for a while before you begin to write.
 - Consider an analogy. You might begin with something like, “My faith life has been like a caterpillar becoming a butterfly because . . .” If you use an analogy, make sure that it helps you tell the story in a meaningful way and does not distract you. For example, if you use the caterpillar analogy, talk about life as a caterpillar, when and why you went into a cocoon state, what happened in that state to make you different, and what life is like as so either find a new analogy or do not use one.
 - Consider a scene from a movie or the lyrics of a song. You can use a clip from a movie or a recording of a song, as long as it communicates what you want to say as well as or better than you could yourself. Also consider making your point by just referencing a movie scene or speaking the lyrics of a song.
 - There is no need to shock people. Although some people have a “hit bottom” experience that brings them to God, most come to experience God in the little things of life and through everyday experiences. Give an honest talk about your own experience, whatever they may be.

Writing

Take the time to write out your talk. That will help you find the right stories, the right details, and the images to communicate what you want. By writing it out, you can practice aloud, time your talk, share it with others for comments and feedback. In writing your talk, remember the following points:

- Focus on a few things. If you try to say everything, you often end up saying too much, and people get lost in your words.
- Personal witness is the flesh of your talk, but when you also need a skeleton. Make sure you achieve a good balance between the ideas you want to communicate (the skeleton) and the stories that bring it to life (the flesh).

- Use specific examples from your own life. Use only the necessary details to convey your message and make your point. Do not lose the message in the unnecessary details of story.
- Plan your witness so that it flows smoothly from one point to another in a logical order.
- You can use quotations, Scripture passages, songs, and another resources when speaking, but make sure that the majority of the talk comes from you.
- Do your best to witness to your faith without being preachy or giving the impression that you have it all together.
- Write as though you are telling the story to a friend.

Practicing

Practice your talk, and allow others to give you feedback. A story that u think is clear might need more details to make senses to someone else. Feedback will help you get the best possible witness and will help ensure that you will be understood by others. Whenever possible, the program team for the event at which you will be speaking should listen to your witness talk and provide feedback. You should then have the opportunity to make changes and receive additional feedback. By taking time to practice with the program team, you can ensure that you have something valuable to share, and the other program team can be sure the talk matches the other program elements. If this type of support is not available from the program team, find someone you trust and ask that person to work with you in preparing and practicing your talk.

Getting Ready

The final step before giving your talk is to get yourself, your notes, and your other materials ready.

- Pray often. When you are practicing, when you are thinking about your talk, and the moments before giving it, pray often. If possible, ask someone to pray with you before giving your talk.
- Write down your key points. Most witness talks are not read. When you have practiced your talk enough times for it to be very familiar, write the key points (in words or sentence) on index cards. Some people can just write reminders of the flow from one story or idea to the next; others need an outline to work from. Remember that you wanted to say next, in case u forget.
- Preparing any outside resource you are using. Make the page in a book, cue a song or a movie, have visually handy, and so on.

Taking

When giving your talk, keep these hints in mind:

- Talk to the group in a relaxed and informal way. Remember that your task is to talk to and with people, not at them.
- Look at everyone and try to talk to each individual.
- Be yourself-as relaxed and natural as you can be.
- Allow your personality to come trough-use your favorite phrases, laugh at your own stories, let people see the real you.

- Have confidence in yourself and in the witness that you have to share with others.