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Bearing witness



Three arguments for your personal testimonial

Giving testimony

My story wants to be heard - but how do I tell it?

"*Always be ready to answer when someone asks why you are so filled with hope.*" *(1 Peter 3:15)* - but does anyone even want to hear my testimony?

Three arguments for your personal testimony

1. Interest People are interested in personal life testimonies. Whether it's on TV, in the newspapers, on the radio - personal life testimonies are highly popular. When someone is genuine and honest about their ups and downs, everyone is into it - especially when the heart speaks. People are interested in the fate of another. People try to identify with his life, they recognize similarities, different approaches to solutions, they are inspired by his ideas, etc.

2. Competence In relation to your own life, you are competent No one could write your own biography as well as you could. On many theological topics, such as the Trinity, you are much less competent. But when it comes to your personal history, no one knows better than you. No one can disagree with you on that. Quote, "The skeptic may be able to deny their doctrine or attack their church, but he cannot ignore the fact that their lives have changed." (Chuck Swindoll)

3. Impact The primary and most effective evangelism method of the early Christians was personal testimony While people like Paul also pioneered the gospel through theological discussion - most believers simply told their story and their experiences with Jesus. This was very much in line with Jesus' idea: "You will be my witnesses." (Acts 1:8). They said, "We cannot refrain from telling about what we have seen and heard." (Acts 4:10). The gospels are nothing more than first-hand accounts of experience. "This is what we experienced with Jesus" - this is how they could be titled. Through this simple kind of evangelism, thousands have been convinced of Christ over the centuries.

How do I tell "my story"

?

In Acts 26:4-23 we see Paul telling his story before King Agrippa. It is divided into three themes:

His time before conversion:verses 4-11

His conversion:verses 12-18

His time after conversion:verses 19-23

After his story, he asks the king a final question, "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe" (verse 27). If one wanted to give the story of Paul's life a heading, a kind of overarching theme, it might be phrased this way: "Paul's zeal to serve God."

We can use this pattern of Paul's for our story. Every Christian has their own personal story of how they came to know Jesus Christ. Like Paul, everyone goes through the following three stages.

The time before conversion:

Since no one is born a born-again Christian, everyone knows a time in their life when they were not yet a Christian (Eph. 2:1-3). Every Christian knows a once and a now in his life (Eph. 2:13; 5:8; 1 Pet. 2:10). Children raised in Christian homes sometimes dimly remember what it like before they consciously received Jesus into their hearts.

The time of conversion

The time from conversion to the present is marked in every Christian by various changes in behavior, in thinking, in speaking, in willing, and in feeling. In some these changes are outwardly easy to detect (1Co 6:9-11). With others they take place rather inconspicuously. Of course, this also has to do with how much room a Christian leaves for Jesus. The more space Jesus gets, the more visible the change becomes and the more fulfilled this Christian feels about his new life.

Task

Describe the three phases of "your story." In doing so, try to identify a common thread and place this story under a particular theme.

The timebefore the conversion

What was important to you at the time? What did you think about Jesus and the Bible? What problems, goals, questions, etc. did you have then?

The time of conversion

When did you first come in contact with the gospel? What effect did it have on you? What was your reaction? What ultimately convinced you? How, where, and when did you confess your sins to Jesus and accept Him as Lord over your life?

The time after conversion

What changed in your life after that? What experiences did you have with Jesus? What problems, goals, questions, etc. do you have today? How does faith help you with them? Why are you still a Christian today? What do you still want to experience as a Christian?

Closing question

When you tell someone "your story," never forget to end with a closing question (Acts 26:27). This question challenges the listener to respond. The question can be, "Could you do anything with it? What do you think about it?" or something like that.

Principles for wording

1. Be sure to use natural language. Be as normal as you normally speak.

2. Avoid canaanisms. You can generally eliminate pious insider language from your vocabulary. No normal person talks like that.

3. Always ask yourself: would my unbelieving neighbor understand what I am saying? 4. Be honest. Unbelievers smell it immediately when we fool them.

Variations Bene Mueller, the worship leader of Vineyard Bern says, "I always have three life stories of mine ready:

1. A short variation of just under 3 min. for short encounters with little time (even Paul's Acts 26 story was not much longer).

2. A medium-length version of 10 - 15 min. if someone wants to hear more after the short variant

3. An extended form if someone has an evening and is interested."

If you want to tell your story ...

Three basic rules:

1. Don't put pressure on yourself ("I must testify now..."): people smell it against the wind that you want to do your pious duty now.

2. Seize opportunities: Sometimes in conversations there are moments when you are just invited to tell about yourself. Don't miss them.

3. Watch the leading of the Holy Spirit: Sometimes He gives you the impression to start a conversation with this or that, or to approach a certain person. Then be punctually obedient. God wants to use you. He will guide you in conversation (1 Lk. 12:11-12).

Idea

Some Christians carry their story in short form with them at all times, in writing. In postcard format, provided with their own address and telephone number, they give it to people with whom they have had a good encounter. Since a small relationship has already developed, the testimony is read out. The contact address offers the opportunity for further enquiry and contact.

By the way ...

Young sharers are also grateful when you pass on more than just pious truths to them - they want to know how you live it.

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