

More time spent with fewer people leads to greater lasting impact for the Kingdom of God.

BSU Christian Challenge New Mexico State University Study Series

HOW TO SHARE YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY IN 3 MINUTES OR LESS

In John 4:39, a woman who has an encounter with Jesus. She is convinced that he is the Lord and goes to her city to tell others about him. The result: “many Samaritans of that town believed in him because of the words of the woman who testified.” This is just one example in scripture of people sharing their personal testimony of how they met the Savior. You may feel that this woman’s story is more epic than your own, but let that not be a discouragement. The truth is that many people weren’t living radically sinful lifestyles before coming to faith. Just tell people the way Christ changed your life. Everyone’s testimony is powerful because it is a story about moving from death to life.

Giving your personal testimony is a way to share the gospel with others by explaining your personal salvation experience. It gives other an example of how God changes lives. It is one of the most effective means of sharing your faith because, although a person can try to refute that Jesus alone offers salvation, they cannot refute the fact that you’ve found reason to place your hope in Christ.

It is important to learn how to share your personal testimony in 2-3 minutes because if you can’t share it quickly, you won’t share it very often. After learning how to share it this quickly, you may see new doors open to share the gospel. You will sometimes find yourself in a situation where you can spend more than 3 minutes, but it is very easy to expand upon the story after you have it down to its key points.

1. Your Background (Less Than 1 Minute)

- Example: Acts 22:3-5
- You can talk about a number of things here such as what your family life was like, what you used to think about God before conversion, etc. You just need enough background information to communicate who you were or are.
- If you came to Christ at a young age, you may have trouble with thinking of what to communicate here, especially if you can’t ever remember not being a Christian. If this is your case, simply communicate how you grew up, your family, etc.

2. Conversion Experience (1-2 Minutes)

- Example: Acts 22:6-16. Note how Paul expresses that Jesus is Lord (vs. 8) and that he needed to be forgiven of his sins and call on Christ’s name (vs. 16).
- This is, in essence, a means of presenting the gospel to someone, so it is the most important part. After hearing about your conversion, the listener should have an idea how to turn to Christ themselves.
- A few things need to be communicated well here:
 - God created man to be with God and have eternal life.
 - Sin separates us from God and eternal life (Isaiah 59:2).
 - God loved us so much that he allows us to have fellowship with Him through his son, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9).

- This fellowship is gained by responding to Jesus' lordship ("...confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord...") and believing in his death and resurrection ("...believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead...").

3. Life With Christ (Usually Less Than 1 minute)

- Example: Acts 22:17-21.
- Briefly explain how your life has been different since conversion and/or simply explain the hope that you have in Christ.
- When you are done, *bring the subject of conversation back to your listener*. You could ask them, "Has anything like that ever happened to you?" If they say, "No," you can say, "Would you like it to?" Regardless of what you say, it is crucial that you get them to think about their need for Christ.

Things To Keep in Mind:

- Be joyful.
- Don't lie or embellish.
- Faith comes from hearing the scriptures (Romans 10:17), so include a couple of key verses, especially ones instrumental in your conversion.
- Avoid terms that confuse people, such as "redeemed," "saved," "righteousness," etc. For instance, if you tell someone that you "felt convicted," they might ask you if you've been to prison before.
- If you aren't sure as to the exact moment you came to faith, simply talk about a time when you may have come to Christ. You may get a chance to explain a later time when you were certain God had changed your life.
- Keep it current. If you talk only about a decision made in the past, you will fail to represent the work of Jesus in the believer's daily life.

Example 1:

Background: I was raised in a small community in west Texas. I had one brother that was about a year and a half older than I was. My mom and dad were both Christians, so it was just our custom on Sunday morning to get up and get our ears scrubbed and inspected and, once arriving at the church, head off to Sunday school. At the church where we went, Sunday school was where they divided you down by age groups and someone would come in to teach you the Bible.

Conversion Experience: I remember one Sunday morning where the pastor came to our group's class and he asked us, "How many of you are not Christians?" For the first time in my life, I suddenly realized that I was not a Christian, even though I had been raised in a Christian home and had been in church all of my life. I raised my hand as did another girl in that department, so he stood there and talked to us about becoming Christians. I do not remember most of what it was that the preacher had to say day, but I've heard it said many times after that, and I know that the essence of his message was this: God created man to have fellowship with him, but man had broken that close relationship with God and chose to go his own way. Fellowship with God was broken, but he continued to love us. He says that "the wages of sin is death [Romans 6:23]," and either I had to die for my sins or someone else had to pay the penalty for me. God sent his son, Jesus, to die [and] pay the penalty of our sin. God had said, "without the shedding of blood, there can be no forgiveness" (Hebrews 9:22) so he loved me and sent his son, Jesus, to die for me. I went into the regular church service (I don't know how much later it was after that), and the pastor said, "If you're standing out there and you want to become a Christian, in a few moments we are going to

stand to sing, and I want you to step out from where you are, walk down this aisle here to the front and meet me here; we'll pray and ask Jesus to come into your life. I remember looking to another boy standing next to me, and he said, "I'm going." I said, "I am too," and I walked down that aisle. As best I knew how that day, as I prayed with that preacher, I asked Christ to come into my life.

Life With Christ: Later, when I was in college, I came to a point where I doubted that experience because I had not been living my life seriously for God. As best as I knew how to, I decided to ask Christ into my life again. Later on, realized that I had probably been a Christian ever since that day at church when I was little, but I had now become very close and intimate in my relationship with God. Now one of my biggest joys is simply telling people about what Christ did for me and teaching other Christians to do the same.

Example 2:

Background: Growing up, my family and I went to church some, but I never liked going. Early into high school, I decided that I didn't want anything to do with God. That all changed in the summer before my freshman year of college when I had a friend who I thought would commit suicide one night. When I realized I couldn't help her, I became desperate and I told my mother (who is a Christian) about the situation. She told me to pray because only God could help her. I had a hard time asking for God's help because I knew that I had offended Him with my lifestyle. My friend never committed suicide, but God made it clear that night that I need a relationship with Him.

Conversion Experience: After all of this, I decided I would find out more about God and started going to church. There I met Christians who seemed to have the connection with God I longed for. They told me that the Bible is God's message to us, so I began to study it. I learned how it says that God created man to follow his plan and have a perfect relationship with him. However, he gave us a choice to follow His plan or ours. We chose ours by disobeying him (or, "sinning"). Sin separates us from Him (Isaiah 59:2). Thankfully, God still loves us and came to earth as Jesus, who died to take away our sins. He promises that we can have a relationship with God *only* through faith in him. This means that relationship with Him "is a gift from God, not from [good deeds]" (Ephesians 2:8-9). I didn't want to accept this truth. I tried my hardest for months to do good things to earn the right to know God, but I failed every time. One day in church, I tried to sing a song of worship to please God. However, my voice sounded awful and I felt I was failing. Then, as if God came down and touched me, I had a sudden understanding that He didn't care what I could do for Him. He loved me anyway. Then He told me to stop fighting Him and follow Jesus. That day I confessed to God that I was a sinner and that I couldn't save myself. I asked Jesus to come into my life so that I could start living for him.

Life With Christ: Ever since I asked Jesus to take control of my life, my eyes have been opened and I recognize His presence everywhere. Every day, God gives me the power to turn away from my sin. I'm not perfect, but I am now a radically different person. I don't trust in my own efforts anymore because I know that God will take care of me. I just trust in Jesus and tell others about Him because of all the joy He's given me.