

It Happened to Me; It Can Happen to You

“For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard”
(Acts 22:15).

At least three times in Acts, we find the personal testimony of Paul. He used it often when addressing unbelievers. This was first experienced in Acts 9. Secondly, Paul gave his testimony in Acts 22:6-21. Again, he related his testimony to King Agrippa in Acts 26:11-19. His testimony was so powerful and persuasive that Agrippa finally said to Paul, “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28).

Paul used his testimony as a form of witnessing. A witness usually gives a testimony of something that is evidence in a case. A witness is someone who observes a certain event and bears witness to it. *Webster’s Dictionary* relates that “to bear witness,” means to “declare, on the strength of personal observation, that something is true.”

Henry Poitras in his *Fishers of Men Series* writes, “A witness tells what they have seen and heard (Acts 4:20, 22:15). Your story of personal experience is captivating, inoffensive, indisputable, and most of all ‘salt’ that will settle in and create thirst. Remember we are witnesses not judges.”

Through our testimony, we can persuade men to accept truth.

“Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Corinthians 5:11).

When anything good comes our way, we usually tell it. The early Christians were told not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. They responded, “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:20) The *NIV* translation reads, “For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).

The early church believed in the “every believer ministry,” and everyone went everywhere telling the good news about his changed life. The gospel spread through ordinary men reaching ordinary men. They were not big-time evangelists, just witnesses. They simply told what they had seen and heard, explaining what they had encountered. They gave an answer concerning the hope they had within.

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).

In the general sense “witnessing” is telling the good things that the Lord has done for you. Even the way we live is a witness to others.

“We can’t preach the good news and be the bad news. We are to love, accept and forgive, as we have been loved, accepted and forgiven by God.” (*Rivers of Revival* by Neil T. Anderson and Elmer L. Towns)

Leonard Ravenhill said, “A man with experience is never at the mercy of a man with an argument.” It is difficult to talk someone out of what he has experienced (John 9:24-25).

“Witnessing” is an effective means of evangelism, because you are explaining what God has done in your life. No one can argue with a transformed life or other miracles experienced.

“And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it . . . What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it” (Acts 4:14, 16).

In a more specific sense “witnessing” is telling others what salvation/eternal life means to you. It includes three parts.







1. **BEFORE:** What you were like before receiving eternal life.
2. **HOW:** How you received salvation/eternal life. This would explain how you came to obey Acts 2:38.
3. **NOW:** What salvation/eternal life means to you. Here you would also declare the peace you experience now and your hope for the future.

In your testimony you should always emphasize the positive by telling the great things that the Lord has done. Be careful not to give credit to the devil in the first part of your testimony. Begin by telling what your life was like before you met Jesus Christ. It is not necessary to go into a lot of detail. Keep your entire testimony to 3-5 minutes. Be brief and to the point.

Be careful not to talk in a “preachy” way. You are not preaching. You are giving your testimony. Most people are willing to listen to your journey of faith. Do not be pushy about sharing your faith. However, do not hide it either. Faith can be shared in casual ways. Always express how the church and the Lord have blessed your life. Avoid any negative comments about the church and other Christians. Do not criticize the church the person you are witnessing to attends.

It is important to teach people how to tell their story in their area of influence. It is estimated that every person has about twelve major contacts in society. This includes close friends, relatives, co-laborers, and neighbors. These can be witnessed to first, and they already have a good idea of your transformed life. However, do not stop there. Tell your story to anyone who is open to hear it. Our testimony allows others to know, “It happened to me. It can happen to you!”

Discipleship Journal offers suggestions in “Witnessing at Work” (Issue 193). They include:

-  Pray.
-  Speak openly about church activities, Bible studies, and your faith.
-  Bring a Christian perspective to conversations.
-  Allow others to see a glimpse of your life before Christ.
-  See others through Jesus' eyes.
-  Don't be surprised by rejection (1 Samuel 8:7).

It's Time to Think

Write out your testimony of coming to the Lord. This can be used to witness to others. (Remember to include BEFORE, HOW, and NOW.)

Study Questions

1. What is a "witness"? _____

2. What are three steps in preparing your testimony? _____

3. How many minutes should you use to tell your testimony? _____

4. Why is witnessing an effective means of evangelism? _____

5. How many people are included in our area of influence? These are made up of what type(s) of people? _____

