

Saved to Serve HIM – Part 3

(Adapted from Raymond Woodward's *Life Course 401*)

“To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you”
(1 Corinthians 9:22-23).

HOW TO BUILD A BRIDGE OF FRIENDSHIP

Good friendships are usually intentional, rather than accidental. Developing friendships with unbelievers often requires going the second mile, taking some risks, and moving outside your own comfort zone; and with our busy lifestyles, these kinds of relationships take **PLANNING**. That’s why the Bible tells us to “work at bringing others to Christ” (2 Timothy 2:4, NLT). If you don’t plan to cultivate friendships with unbelievers, you’ll find that you never have the time to do so. “We should make our plans – counting on God to direct us” (Proverbs 16:9).

Step #1: Become Aware

- Make a list of your unsaved family and friends by name
- Realize that they are your responsibility
- Assess each person’s level of spiritual receptivity
- Discover what their interests and needs are
- Look for areas of common ground that you can build on
- Figure out what kind of testimony each would respond to

Step #2: Commit To Prayer

- Make a prayer list and pray daily for your unsaved friends
- Pray that God will draw them to Himself (John 6:44)
- Pray that God will remove spiritual blindness (2 Cor. 4:3-4)
- Pray that God will make their heart receptive (John 16:8-13)
- Pray for an opportunity to share a clear witness (Col. 4:3-5)
- Pray that God will give you wisdom in what to say (James 1:5)
- Pray that God will use the words you say (1 Thess. 1:5)

Step #3: Show You Care

- Treat everyone with respect as **PEOPLE**, not as **PROSPECTS**
- Be a genuine friend; help them in practical ways
- Be a good listener; it is a great way to show love
- Make **SERVICE** your aim, not **RECRUITMENT**
- Invite them into your home

- Consciously focus your concern on meeting their needs
- Go out of your way to love them until they ask you WHY!
- Accept people as they are without being judgmental

Step #4: Be Ready To Share

- Identify yourself as a positive, joyful follower of Christ
- Share a testimony when the occasion naturally arises (it will!)
- Never force the gospel; be patient, for God is working!
- Use crisis situations to show why we all need God
- Ask questions that lead to spiritual discussions
- Give them appropriate message tapes or books to read
- Focus on the essential; don't get sidetracked by hang-ups
- Invite them to a service that is designed to reach them
- Offer to pray with them after sharing the gospel

The Bible doesn't tell us to share our FAITH, but to share our HOPE. Faith is what you believe, hope is the benefit of what you believe. Share the HOPE!

THE VALUE OF MY TESTIMONY

"You are the ones chosen by God ... God's instruments to do his work and speak out for him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference he made for you" (1 Peter 2:9, TM).

- It is unique – there are no others just like it.
- It is personal and easy to understand.
- I am the authority on it, so it is difficult to argue with.
- People love a personal story – and remember it.
- People can relate to it, so it builds a relational bridge.
- In a postmodern world, it is the most effective witness.

FOUR PARTS OF MY TESTIMONY

1. What my life was like before I met Christ. (LEAST TIME)
 - What common circumstances would an unbeliever identify with?
 - What were your attitudes that an unbeliever would identify with?
 - What was most important to you?
 - What substitute for God did you use to find meaning in your life? (sports/fitness, success at work, marriage, sex, making money, drugs/alcohol, having fun, entertainment, popularity, hobbies)
2. How I realized I needed Christ. (MORE TIME)
 - What significant steps led up to your conversion?

- What needs, hurts or problems made you dissatisfied with the way you were living without God?
 - How did God get your attention?
 - What motivated you?
3. How I committed my life to Christ. (EVEN MORE TIME)
- What specifically did you do?
 - Where did it happen?
 - What did you say in your prayer? (be specific)
4. The difference Christ has made in my life. (MOST TIME)
- What benefits have you experienced or felt?
 - What problems have been resolved? (give current example)
 - How has Jesus helped you change for the better?
 - How has Jesus helped you in your relationships?
- If you became a Christian AS AN ADULT, use the four basic steps to compose your testimony.
 - If you became a Christian AT AN EARLY AGE BUT WALKED AWAY, use the same four steps but start with the time just prior to your RECOMMITMENT.
 - If you became a Christian AT AN EARLY AGE AND NEVER STRAYED, use the same four steps but point out some deep need or common problem that others struggle with, and explain why you never had to experience it.



A personal testimony is still the most effective and persuasive form of communication – that's why COMMERCIALS work so well!

SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARING MY TESTIMONY:

- Pray and ask God to give you the right words.
- Keep it short and to the point. Avoid excessive, unnecessary details.
- Refer to experiences most people have in common.
- Share a slice of your life (a story) that they will identify with.
- Be honest about your continuing struggles. Your life is not perfect.
- Don't imply that all of your problems ended at conversion.
- Spend the most time on Part Four – the difference Christ has made.
- Emphasize WHY you received Christ (the benefits of doing it).
- Mention the benefit of being certain of your destiny when you die.
- Don't exaggerate or brag about pre-conversion sins.
- Don't make negative remarks about other denominations or people.
- Don't quote a lot of Scripture (a maximum of one or two verses).

- Don't answer questions they haven't asked.
- Give concrete examples of the changes in your life.
- The more specific you are, the more dynamic it will be.
- Avoid using dates, names and ages. It doesn't matter to them.
- Be prepared. Practice until it feels and sounds natural.
- Speak casually and informally, in a matter-of-fact tone.
- Don't dramatize or embellish your story.
- Don't share mystical experiences. Share on their level, not yours.
- Don't talk down to people. Don't sound "preachy."
- Use "I," "me," and "my," not "you." It's about you, not them.
- Use humor – it reduces tension and relaxes people. Smile!
- Choose a central theme for your testimony.

POSSIBLE TESTIMONY THEMES

HOW SERVING JESUS HAS HELPED ME DEAL WITH MY ...	HOW SERVING JESUS HAS GIVEN ME ...
Worries / Anxiety	Inner peace
Guilt / Shame	Forgiveness and a fresh start
Anger / Temper	Patience and love
Emptiness / Lack of purpose	Purpose and meaning in life
Grief	Comfort and joy
Stress / Burnout	New energy and power for living
Low self-esteem	Significance (I'm valuable to God!)
Poor health	Healing or strength to go on
Disappointment	Trust in God's good plans
Insecurity	Confidence and sense of security
Regrets	A second chance at life
Discontent / Frantic activity	Contentment and peace
Fears	Faith to face my fears
Loneliness	Assurance God's always with me
Lack of emotional support	A church family that supports me
Addictions / Habits	Freedom and power to change
Self-centeredness	Love for other people
Despair / Depression	Hope
Cheap thrills	Real and lasting happiness
Boredom with my life	Adventure with God
Fear of death	Assurance of heaven

Feeling something was missing	A sense of fulfillment
Bitterness and resentment	The ability to be free from my past
Pain of rejection	God's unconditional love
Marriage problems	Positive changes in my marriage
Financial problems	Positive changes in my finances
Business problems	Positive changes in my business

Always remember that you have more than one testimony, so choose the testimony that best matches your listener. You can tell about how other people's lives have been changed by the Lord too, if their experience would relate better.

TRANSLATING CHRISTIAN TERMS

CHRISTIAN TERM ...	WHEN TALKING TO UNBELIEVERS ...
"Blessed"	"Happy"
"I was born again"	"I was given a fresh, new start"
"I was saved"	"My life changed at that moment"
"Jesus is my Lord"	"Jesus is the manager (or CEO) of my life"
"I repented"	"I put Jesus in the driver's seat"
"I had sinned"	"I changed my way of thinking"
"All are sinners"	"I made a mental U-turn"
"I felt convicted"	"I knew I'd blown it"
"The Holy Ghost"	"Nobody's perfect"
"It was glorious"	"No one bats 1000"
"The Lord laid on my heart"	"I realized"
"Praise the Lord"	"God's Spirit"
"Hallelujah"	"It was an incredible experience"
	"I felt"
	"I'm really thankful to God"
	"Living for God is exciting"

HOW TO LEAD INTO YOUR TESTIMONY:

- Listen for problems that Jesus has helped you with.

"You know, that very thing used to be a big issue in my life too. But then I discovered something that made a major difference in my life."

- Refer to a news item dealing with a common problem.

“Did you read about that? I can sure identify with how those people feel. It wasn’t all that long ago that I struggled with those feelings too. But then something happened that changed everything for me.”

- Start with a statement they’d agree with or a situation they relate to.

“Sometimes life just gets so complicated. Things sure don’t always turn out the way we planned.”

- Apologize to people you’ve known a long time but not witnessed to.

“I need to apologize to you. We’ve known each other a long time, and I consider you to be a good friend. But I’ve never told you about the best thing that ever happened to me.”

“Let the whole world know what he has done for you” (Psalm 105:1, LB).

“Each day tell someone that he saves” (Psalm 96:2, LB).

“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15, NIV).

Study Questions

1. List four (4) steps to use in building a bridge of friendship with someone you hope to evangelize personally.

1) _____
 2) _____
 3) _____
 4) _____

2. List the four (4) parts to your testimony, and the amount of time that should be spent sharing each part.

1) _____
 2) _____
 3) _____
 4) _____

3. Read through the list of suggestions for preparing your testimony. On the lines below, write the suggestions that you have never used that would improve your testimony the most. At the next opportunity, be sure to include these. _____

