

THE VALUE OF YOUR STORY

1. It is unique! There are no others just like it.
2. It is personal and easy to understand.
3. You are the authority on it. It's difficult to argue with.
4. People love to hear personal stories and they remember them.
5. People can relate to it. It builds a relational bridge.
6. In our postmodern world, it may be your most effective witness.

“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) “

THE FOUR PARTS OF YOUR STORY

1. What my life was like before I met Christ:

- *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:

- *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:

- *What specifically did you do? Where did it happen?*
- *What did you say in your prayer? Be specific.*

4. The difference it has made in my life:

- *What benefits have you experienced or felt?*
- *What problems have been resolved?*
- *How has Jesus helped you change for the better?*
- *How has it helped your relationships?*
- *Give a current example.*

SUGGESTIONS FOR PREPARING YOUR TESTIMONY

- Pray and ask God to give you the right words.
- Write it out on paper. God honors preparation.
- Keep it short and to the point. Don't lose sight of your goal.
- Be succinct. Avoid excessive, unnecessary details.
- Try to keep your testimony below 3 minutes.
- 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 4: 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 religions or people.
- Don't mention any denomination.
- Don't quote a lot of Scripture. (A maximum of one verse)
- 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 it until it feels and sounds natural.
- Read it aloud and edit it to make it conversational.
- Let a friend read it and make suggestions.
- 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!

TRANSLATING CHRISTIAN WORDS (A cliché lexicon)

CHRISTIAN TERM

"Blessed"

"I was Born Again"

"I was Saved"

"Jesus is my Lord"

"I repented"

"I had sinned"

"All are sinners"

"I felt convicted"

"The Holy Ghost"

WHEN TALKING WITH THE UNCHURCHED

"Happy"

"I was given a fresh, new start"

"I knew I was forgiven"

"He's the Manager/boss of my Life" or "He is calling the shots."

"I changed my mind" (a mental U-turn)

"I knew I'd blown it"

"We are all imperfect"

"I realized that..."

"God's Spirit"

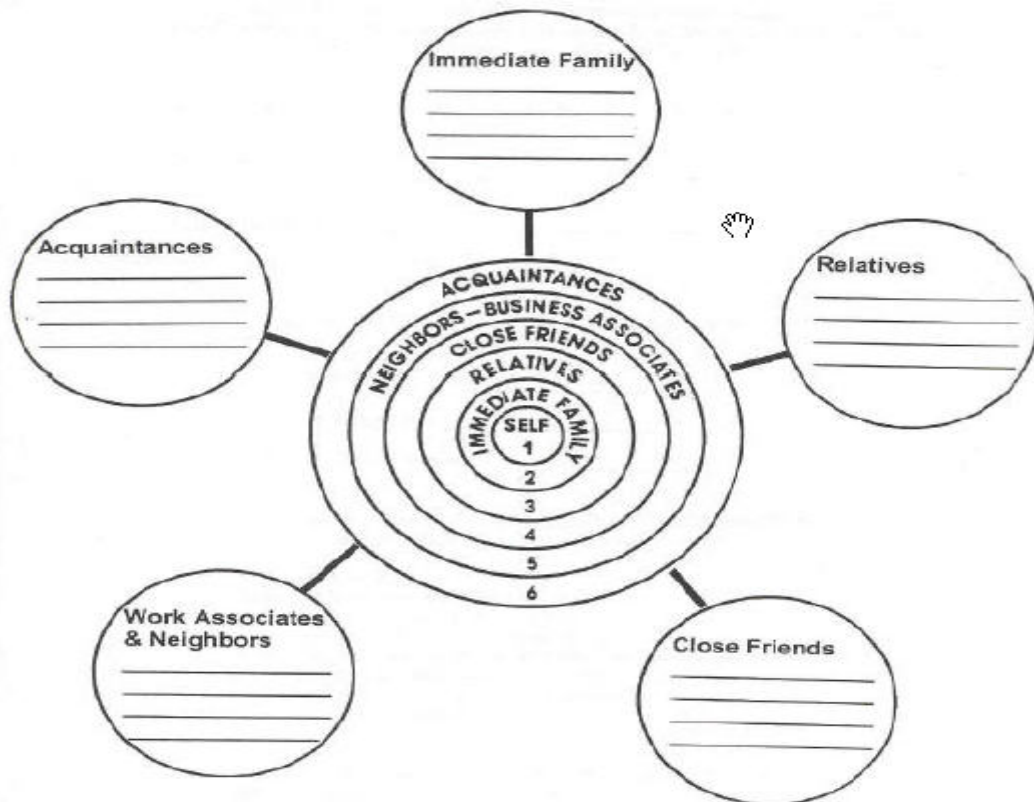
PRACTICAL THINGS I CAN DO TO PREPARE MYSELF FOR SHARING THE LOVE OF CHRIST

HOW TO LEAD INTO YOUR TESTIMONY

1. Listen for problems or needs that Jesus has helped you with.
"You know, that used to be a big issue in my life too (or my marriage, etc.) In fact, I felt pretty (hopeless, frustrated, etc.) But then I discovered something that made a major difference in my life."
2. Refer to something in the news or on TV that deals with a common need or problem.
"Did you read about... I can sure identify with how those people feel. It wasn't that long ago that I struggled with that too. But then something happened that changed everything for me..."
 - Start with a statement they'd agree with or situation they relate to.
"It seems like life is getting faster and faster."
"Sometimes life just gets so complicated."
"Life doesn't always turn out the way you planned it."
3. Apologize to people you've known a long time but haven't witnessed to.
"Bill, I need to apologize to you. We've known each other a long time, and I consider you to be a good friend. But friends don't keep secrets – and I've never told you about the best thing that ever happened to me. I guess I was afraid you'd think I was some kind of nut. Anyway... (begin your story)."

"Each day tell someone that he saves." Psalm 96:2b (LB)

MY SPHERE OF INFLUENCE



HOW TO BUILD A BRIDGE OF FRIENDSHIP - A plan for sharing your faith

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, it takes *planning*. If you don't plan to cultivate friendships with unbelievers, you'll find that you never have the time to do so.

STEP #1: Become Aware - of the unbelievers God has placed in your life

- Make a list of them by name.
- Realize that they are your responsibility.
- Assess each person's level of spiritual receptivity.
- Discover and write down 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

- Use your list to pray daily for your unsaved friends.
- Pray that God will draw them to himself. John 6:44
- Pray that God will remove their spiritual blindness. 2 Cor. 4:3-4
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will make their heart receptive. Jn.16:8-13
- Pray you'll get the 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 the Holy Spirit 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 Good News. Be patient. God is working!
- Use crisis situations to show why we all need God.
- Ask questions that lead to spiritual discussions.
- Give them appropriate message mp3s or books to read.
- Concentrate on the essential. Don't get sidetracked by hang-ups.
- Invite them to church.
- Offer to lead in a prayer to commit after sharing the Good News.

