

**What is the most significant thing Jesus changed in your life when you embraced a relationship with him?**

Have each one in the group share.

**In what specific ways might each story that was told, be of value to a non-Christian to hear?**

Have the students share specific ways each other's stories would be meaningful to non-Christians?

**What exactly is a testimony?**

A testimony is a story relating one person's perspective of an event. If you watched a car accident you would be asked to give the police officer your testimony about what happened. The police officer is not interested in your life story, but only your perspective of how the events unfolded.

When we give our spiritual testimony, we are not so much talking about us, but about how God has been at work. We are simply sharing our personal experience of how we have seen God at work in us or in the life of another person. The desired end result of a testimony is that people would say, "Wow, God is amazing. I would like to see him work in my life in a similar way."

***Psalm 66:16 (NIV)***

*Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.*

**Why do you think hearing people's stories are so impactful?**

Stories of life experiences touch the heart in ways that "teaching" cannot. That's why people love novels, TV and movies. We cannot resist a good story. Stories bring a sense of possible victory and hope. No one can argue with your story. They may disagree with your theology, but they can't deny what you experienced.

**If each of us was to take more time to share with a non-Christian the difference God made in our lives, what type of things do you think you would want to share?**

### Biblical Examples of Testimony Sharing:

Describe a testimony principle for each of the sections in Paul's testimony.

#### **Acts 26:1-29 (NIV)**

<sup>1</sup> Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself."

So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: <sup>2</sup> "King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, <sup>3</sup> and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

<sup>4</sup> "The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup> They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee. <sup>6</sup> And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. <sup>7</sup> This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night. O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. <sup>8</sup> Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

<sup>9</sup> "I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. <sup>10</sup> And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. <sup>11</sup> Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.

<sup>12</sup> "On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. <sup>13</sup> About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. <sup>14</sup> We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

<sup>15</sup> "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' "'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. <sup>16</sup> 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me

1) Seize any opportunity you can to tell your spiritual story.

2) Describe life before you encountered Christ.

3) Describe how you were introduced to Christ.

and what I will show you. <sup>17</sup> I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them <sup>18</sup> to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

<sup>19</sup> "So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. <sup>20</sup> First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. <sup>21</sup> That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. <sup>22</sup> But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen-- <sup>23</sup> that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

<sup>24</sup> At this point Festus interrupted Paul's defense. "You are out of your mind, Paul!" he shouted. "Your great learning is driving you insane."

<sup>25</sup> "I am not insane, most excellent Festus," Paul replied. "What I am saying is true and reasonable. <sup>26</sup> The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner. <sup>27</sup> King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do."

<sup>28</sup> Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"

<sup>29</sup> Paul replied, "Short time or long--I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains."

4) Describe how you responded to Jesus and how that changed your life.

5) Provide opportunity to react or raise questions.

6) Invite a response.

**In point form, write down the parts of your story that you think would be meaningful in pointing another person toward God. Use the principles mentioned above.**

Ideas might include:

- What were some ways you had tried to find answers or fulfillment apart from God?
- What was going on in your life that made you realize you needed God in your life?
- How were you introduced to Christ?
- What made you decide to give your life to Christ? How did you go about this?
- What difference has Christ made in your life?

For those who became Christ-followers as a child, it may be more impactful to simply express how Christ has been at work in your life lately or through difficult times.

**TIPS:**

- Keep your story short and to the point. It should be very practical.
- Keep your story natural. Don't use "churchy" words or expressions that people will not understand or resonate with.
- Allow people to see how meaningful this experience was for you.
- Do not put down other churches, denominations or people.
- Your story is ultimately to be more about God than it is you.
- Once you are done your story, ask for their reaction. If appropriate, ask them if they are interested in knowing God in a similar way.

**YOUR STORY OUTLINE:**

**Be prepared next week to share your story with someone else in the group.**

Teachers: If your church has a website it might be worthwhile to have the students place their story on the site in either written or video format.

**Knowing your own story and sharing it with others is two completely different things. What are some possible scenarios where it would be natural to share your life changing story?**

When someone is going through a similar situation you went through

When someone is wondering why you chose to become a Christ-follower

When someone is simply asking about your life

When any other opportunity we can't anticipate reveals itself

**What are some tactful ways you might be able to bridge into telling your story?**

**Examples:**

**After someone shares a struggle they are facing:**

"I've had a similar sort of struggle in my life. Would you be interested in hearing how I made it through it?"

**When someone comments on some positive aspect of your life:**

"I've definitely had some down times, but can I share with you what made a world of difference for me?"

**When people are questioning God's role in their life:**

"I've had times when I questioned God too. Can I tell you a story of how God changed my life?"

**We often feel we do not have a story to tell. The reality is however, that it is highly likely that there is someone within your circles of influence who is in a similar situation you were in before you came to Christ. Hearing your story and why you chose to embrace Christ might be exactly what they need to hear to give them hope. It may be why God placed you alongside of them.**

**Is there anyone within your circles of influence with whom you could share your story in the near future?**



If a person responds with a desire to have a relationship with God, that is when you will want to explain the truths necessary to understand in order to become a child of God.  
What are the four essential truths we discussed in week 2?

**A**cknowledge you have a broken relationship with God

**B**elieve in Jesus Christ

**C**onfess your sins and repent

**D**eclare Jesus is Lord