

# FAITH STORY INFORMATION KIT

## PROVIDED FOR WSBC MEMBERS AND FRIENDS AND DRAWN FROM THE WSBC CLASS CURRICULUM

### DEVELOPING MY LIFE MISSION

Primary Author of CLASS Curriculum: Dr. Rick Warren

*Welcome! Please turn to page 6. Read pages 6-10. Return to page 1. Reflect, review and respond to the fill-in-the-blanks on pages 1-5 in your Faith Story Information Kit. Doing so will help you as you think about preparing your own faith story. Your faith story can be a life-influencing gift which you share with a family member, friend or co-worker. Your faith story can be an encouraging gift which you may want to share with your church family on a Sunday morning. (If interested, please contact Pastor Gary bruland@wsbc.org.) By preparing your faith story you honor the biblical directive: "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).*

## SHARING YOUR FAITH STORY

*"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 (Mes) "...He has given us this message of restored relationships to tell others. Therefore, we are Christ's representatives." 2 Cor. 5:19b-20 (GW)*

## THERE ARE TWO PARTS TO YOUR LIFE MESSAGE

The \_\_\_\_\_ Part

**My Testimony** – Sharing your own story of how you began a relationship with Jesus.

The \_\_\_\_\_ Part

**The Good News** – Explaining to someone how to begin their relationship with Jesus.

**Your personal testimony can be a very persuasive form of communication!**

**The Bible is full of testimonies:**

DAVID "Come and listen, and I will tell you what God has done for me." Ps. 66:16 (NCV)

THE WOMAN AT THE WELL "Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony." John 4:39 (NIV)

THE MAN BORN BLIND "I don't know whether he is good or bad, but I know this: I was blind, and now I see!" John 9:25

PETER AND JOHN "We cannot stop telling about the wonderful things we have seen and heard." Acts 4:20 (NLT)

**We are commanded to share our testimonies:**

*"Let the whole world know what he has done for you." Ps. 105:1b (LB) "Every day tell how he saves us. Tell the nations of his glory; tell all peoples the miracles he does." Ps. 96:2-3 (NCV)*

## THE VALUE OF YOUR TESTIMONY

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**.

## PREPARING YOUR FAITH STORY

*“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)*

### A. IF YOU BECAME A CHRISTIAN AS AN \_\_\_\_\_ THE FOUR PARTS OF YOUR TESTIMONY

#### 1. WHAT MY LIFE WAS LIKE \_\_\_\_\_ 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?  
(e.g.: Asports, fitness, success at work, marriage, sex, making money,  
drugs, alcohol, having fun, entertainment, popularity, hobbies)*

#### 2. HOW I \_\_\_\_\_ 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?*

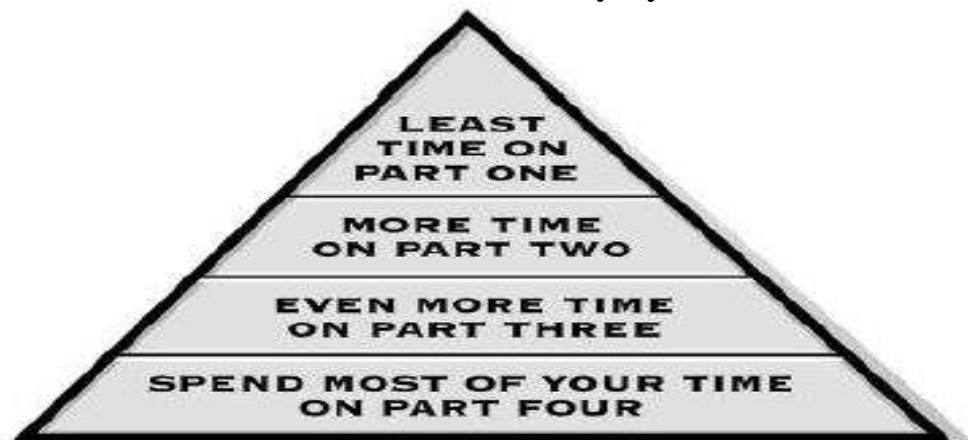
#### 3. HOW I \_\_\_\_\_ MY LIFE TO CHRIST.

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

#### 4. THE \_\_\_\_\_ 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. ...*

### The Testimony Pyramid



**B. IF YOU BECAME A CHRISTIAN AS A \_\_\_\_\_ BUT WALKED AWAY OR NEVER GREW UNTIL A DEEPER RECOMMITMENT AS AN ADULT.**

Use the same four steps, but start with the time just prior to your *recommitment*. Give some examples of how you were trying to meet your own needs without Christ but it wasn't working. Describe what caused you to realize you needed Christ directing your life and how you made a full commitment to him. Then explain how Jesus is currently meeting the deepest needs in your life.

**C. IF YOU BECAME A CHRISTIAN AT AN EARLY AGE AND NEVER \_\_\_\_\_.**

Use the same four steps with this modification: Point out some deep need or common problem that you see *other people* trying to resolve. Point out how unsuccessful their attempts are to meet their own need. Then explain why you never experienced that problem by trusting Christ early in life. Don't say the exact age. Continue with steps 3 and 4.

**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 site 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 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!
- Choose a central theme. (See list)

## POSSIBLE TESTIMONY THEMES

### How Trusting Jesus has helped me deal with my...

- ☐ Worries / Anxiety
- ☐ Guilt/Shame
- ☐ Anger / Temper
- ☐ Emptiness/Lack of Purpose
- ☐ Grief
- ☐ Stress / Burnout
- ☐ Low self-esteem
- ☐ Poor health
- ☐ Disappointment
- ☐ Insecurity
- ☐ Regrets
- ☐ Discontent / frantic activity
- ☐ Fears
- ☐ Loneliness
- ☐ Lack of emotional support
- ☐ Addictions / Habits
- ☐ Self-centeredness
- ☐ Despair / Depression
- ☐ Cheap thrills
- ☐ Boredom with my life
- ☐ Fear of Death
- ☐ "Something was missing"
- ☐ Bitterness & resentment
- ☐ Pain of rejection
- ☐ Marriage Problems
- ☐ Financial Problems
- ☐ Business Problems

### How Trusting Jesus has given me ....

Inner Peace  
 Forgiveness and a fresh start  
 Patience and love  
 Purpose in life and meaning  
 Comfort and Joy  
 New energy and power for living  
 Significance. I am valuable to God  
 Strength to go on  
 Trust in his good plans  
 Confidence and sense of security  
 A second chance at life  
 Contentment and peace  
 Faith to face my fears  
 Assurance He's always with me  
 A church family that supports me  
 Power to change. Freedom.  
 Love for other people  
 Hope  
 Real, lasting happiness  
 Adventure with God  
 Assurance of heaven  
 A sense of fulfillment  
 The ability to be free from my past  
 God's unconditional love  
 Positive changes in my marriage  
 Positive changes in my finances  
 Positive changes in my business

**God allows experiences in each of our lives so we can relate to others who need Christ!**

## COMMON GROUND CIRCUMSTANCES

Could you give a testimony about how Jesus helped you with any of the following life experiences?

### **POSITIVE:**

Adoption, breaking a bad habit, financial gain, raising kids, marriage strengthened or restored, new baby, new business, new friends, new home, new marriage, new job, restored relationships ...

### **MAJOR CRISES**

Abuse, accident, addiction, abortion, bankruptcy, broken dream, eating disorder, death, depression, disease, discrimination, divorce, empty nest, financial problems, infertility, jail, surgery, others...

- Realize you have more than one testimony!
- Different situations will require different testimonies!
- Choose the testimony that best matches your listener.
- Realize you can tell about how others' lives have been changed too. Your small group can share your stories with each other.
- Don't use religious terms or clichés or broad generalities.
- Ask: "If I were an unbeliever, would this make sense to me?"

### TRANSLATING CHRISTIAN WORDS – *A Cliché Lexicon*

CHRISTIAN TERM	WHEN TALKING WITH SEEKERS
"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"	"He's the Manager/CEO of my Life"
	"I put Jesus in the driver's seat."
"I repented"	"I changed my mind" (a mental U-turn)
"I had sinned"	"I knew I'd blown it"
"All are sinners"	"Nobody's perfect. No one bats 1000."
"I felt convicted"	"I realized that..."
"The Holy Ghost"	"God's Spirit"

### PHRASES TO AVOID IN A TESTIMONY TO UNBELIEVER

*"I just Praise the Lord for..." "Now I am so blessed" "Hallelujah!"  
 "Amen" "It was glorious" "I was convicted" "The Lord laid on my heart"*

### HOW TO LEAD INTO YOUR TESTIMONY

- 1. Listen for problems or \_\_\_\_\_ 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 \_\_\_\_\_ 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. ... "Sometimes life just gets so complicated." ...  
 "Life doesn't always turn out the way you planned it."*
- 3. Apologize to people you've \_\_\_\_\_ 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)."*

## FAITH STORY INFORMATION KIT – READING MATERIALS

Primary Author of CLASS Curriculum: Dr. Rick Warren

One of the most important parts of our life mission is sharing our faith stories with others. Testimonies are important tools that God uses in drawing persons to new life in Christ. While all of our testimonies differ in various ways, another part of your life message and mine is very similar. It's the message of Good News that's been entrusted to all believers.

God clearly tells us that He has a message for us to give to others. 1 Peter 2:9, "*You are the ones chosen by God, God's instruments to do His work and to speak out for Him to tell others of the night and day difference He made of you.*" Have you had Jesus Christ make a night and day difference in your life? The Bible says, "*He has given us this message of restored relationships (that's between us and God) to tell others. Therefore we are Christ's representatives.*" Now, there are two main parts to your life message. The first part is **unique** to you. Part one is your testimony, the story of how you began a relationship with Jesus. But part two is the **universal** message that we're all called to share which is the Good News. We need to be able to explain to others how to accept Jesus as their own personal Savior, Lord and Leader of their lives.

### SHARING MY TESTIMONY—

A personal testimony has long been one of the most powerful forms of communication, and remains so still today. Personal testimony is a most powerful form of persuasion. We know that Madison Avenue has long used personal testimonies. You see it on television all the time.

Years ago and still today: "I've tried Tide. You ought to try it too. I use this stuff for ring around the collar and I no longer have ring around the collar." Why do advertisers use personal stories? It's because personal stories are still the most powerful form of communication.

The Bible is full of many, many examples of people sharing their testimony. David says, "*Come and listen and I'll tell you what God's done for me.*" The woman at the well: "*Many of the Samaritans of the town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony.*" The man who was born blind: "*I don't know whether He's good or bad but I know this: I was blind but now I see.*" That may be your testimony – "I don't have it all figured out. I don't know all the ends and outs. I don't have all the theology down. All I know is Jesus Christ changed my life."

That then is a testimony. You don't have to have it all figured out. You don't have to be a Bible scholar. All you have to say is, "Jesus Christ made a difference in my life." And tell them what difference He made. Then there is Peter and John. They said, "*We cannot stop telling about the wonderful things we have seen and heard.*" Paul, on six different occasions in Acts 22-26, uses his personal testimony to share the good news with unbelievers. Even Jesus spoke by personal testimony. Notice He says in John 3:11, "*Listen carefully, I am speaking sober truth to you and I speak only what I know by experience.* (Circle "by experience") *I give witness only to what I have seen with My own eyes.*" There is nothing second-hand here. No hearsay. Even Jesus is speaking from personal experience which is called your testimony.

Not only do we have examples of this in the Bible but we are commanded very clearly to share our testimonies with the world. Psalm 105, "*Let the whole world know what He's done for you.*" Psalm 96, "*Everyday tell how He saves us. Tell the nations of His glory. Tell all peoples of the miracles He does.*"

What's the big deal? Why should I have to tell my story? Why don't we just have professionals do this? Why should I tell the difference Jesus made in my life? There are six values to your testimony that make it unique:

**1. There are none others like it. It's totally unique.** You are the only one who can give your testimony. If you don't tell other people what's happened in your life, that story will never be heard on the face of this planet. If you don't tell your unique story of how you came to know Christ, no one will ever hear it.

**2. It's personal and it's easy to understand.** It's always easier to understand somebody's testimony, somebody's story, than it is a bunch of principles and facts and figures.

**3. You are the authority on it.** It's difficult to argue with a testimony. You say this is what happened to me. How do I argue with that? It happened to you and you know it happened.

**4. People love to hear personal stories. They remember them.** They can relate to them.

**5. It builds a relational bridge.** When you tell your story – “This is what I was like before I became a Christian and here's what happened afterwards. Here's the thing I'm still struggling with,” they go, “Oh, I see what you mean!” People relate to it a whole lot easier and a lot quicker.

**6. In our postmodern world, it may be your most effective witness.** A lot of people today aren't going to listen to the Bible. They don't accept the Bible. They don't believe the Bible is completely true. It's true if you want to believe but it's not true if you don't want to believe it. Many people today don't even believe there's such a thing as truth. “There's no absolute truth. Whatever's right for you...” They may not even accept the Bible. If you start quoting from the Bible, forget it. They don't accept the Bible. But they'll listen to your story. And so you can share it.

You are actually far more affective in witnessing than a pastor or church staff member. Pastor Gary has said that when he shares as a pastor, he's considered the paid professional. They say, “We expect him to talk about God. He's a pastor.” But when unbelievers hear you talk about Jesus, you're the satisfied customer. Who has more credibility? Paid salesmen or satisfied customers? No question about it. You have a stronger testimony than any church staff member or pastor. The Bible says that testimony is a powerful tool. And, nobody can say it's inaccurate or wrong, if it's your story!

The Bible says in 1 Peter 3:15, “*Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.*” Circle “for the hope that you have”. We are to share our hope. Did you know that the Bible never, ever tells you to share your faith? It says share your hope. Why? Because faith is what you believe. Hope is the benefit of it. You're to share what difference it's made in your life. People don't care if you're a Christian or not. They want to know, so what? Before they know how you became a Christian they want to know why you became a Christian. They want to know what difference it can make. Is there any solution to any problem that might help me? Is there any advantage of becoming a Christian? Are there any benefits of becoming a Christian? What's the purpose of it? So share the hope you've found!

In these notes, I'm going to share with you how to write out your testimony based on three different scenarios about when you came to Christ. Some of you came to Christ as grown adults. Some of you came to Christ as children and then kind of walked on the wild side and came back to God. Some of you came maybe as a young person or child and you've lived for the Lord basically your entire life. Depending upon where you came from you're going to have a different kind of testimony.

**Here are the four parts of your testimony if you became a Christian as an adult:**

**1. What my life was like before I met Christ.** You want to share things like what were the common circumstances that would make an unbeliever identify with me? What were your attitudes that an unbeliever would identify with? What was most important to you before you became a Christian? What substitutes for God did you use to find meaning in your life? Like sports and fitness, success at work, marriage, sex, making money, drugs or alcohol, having fun, entertainment, having parties, hobbies – what was your god before God became God in your life?

**2. How I realized I needed Christ.** What were the significant steps that led up to your decision? Was there a crisis that got your attention? Or was it slowly, step by step, and you were drawn to Him, attracted to Him, or hammered down? What needs or hurts or problems made you dissatisfied with the way you were living without God and you thought, “There's got to be more

to life than this.” How did God get your attention? That’s a part of your testimony. What motivated you to become a Christian?

**3. How I committed my life to Christ.** What specifically did you do? Where did it happen? What did you say in your prayer? You want to be specific. You didn’t just wake up one day and all of a sudden you were a Christian. When did you step across the line? Imagine a woman having a baby – there was a point of conception. There was a point when you were pregnant or you weren’t. After that point you were. You aren’t kind of pregnant. And you aren’t kind of a Christian. You can grow closer and closer to the Lord but there is a day that you step across. You may not know when that day occurred. That’s ok. I’m going to tell you how to share your testimony. But there was a point when it clicked in your mind whether you know that date or not. It doesn’t make any difference whether you know it or not.

**4. The difference it has made in my life.** This is the most important part. 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? You want to give examples.

Here is what I call the testimony pyramid. I’m going to teach you how to give a testimony in 90 seconds to three minutes. It doesn’t have to be real long to be effective. You want to spend the least amount of time on what you were like before you became a Christian. Some of these testimonies you hear it’s ninety percent of all the big, bad, evil, nasty, evil sins they did before they became a Christian and then “Now I’m saved! Thank you!” That’s not a testimony. That’s a brag-amony. The whole purpose of the first point is saying you were just like anybody else. You’re trying to say you’re on common ground, identifying with other non-believers.

Then you spend a little bit more time on Part Two – How I realized I needed Christ. Then you spend a little bit more on Part Three – How I committed my life to Christ. Then you spend the most part of your testimony on the differences it made, the fourth part. That’s how you’re going to do your testimony.

**If you became a Christian as a child but you walked away from Christ or, perhaps, you never grew until a deeper recommitment as an adult,** here’s what you do. You use the same four steps but you start with the time just prior to your recommitment. What was life like while you were living apart from God? Give some examples of how you were trying to meet your own needs without Christ but it wasn’t working. Describe what caused you to realize you needed Christ directing your life and how you made a commitment to Him. Then spend the most time explaining how Jesus is currently meeting the deepest needs in your life. How is He making a difference?

**If you became a Christian at an early age and never strayed...** What do you do? You use the same four steps with this modification. Point out some deep need or common problem that you see in other people’s lives that people are trying to resolve. Then point how unsuccessful their attempts are to meet that need. Then explain why you never had to experience that problem, by trusting Christ early in life. There are lots of problems other people have that you probably didn’t have to go through because you were trying to follow Christ.

Don’t say the exact age you became a believer. If you say, “I accepted Christ when I was 21,” a 17-year-old kid goes, “Whoopee! I’ve got four more years!” If you say, “I accepted Christ when I was nine years old,” they’d say, “You were just young and didn’t know what you were doing.” Don’t tell them when. What matters is how has it made a difference in your life now.

**Here, then, are some Ways to Work on Your Testimony—**

Pray and ask God to give you the right words. Then write it out on paper because God honors preparation. Keep it short and to the point. Don’t lose sight of your goal.

Some people start telling their story and they get all these details... “I remember it was about eight years ago, or maybe it was nine. No, it was eight because I remember Judy had gone to get a hair cut that day. It was August or July. It was warm, 84, 85 degrees.” Come on!



Get with the story! Keep it short and to the point. You don't want to chase rabbits. Avoid excessive, unnecessary details. Try to keep your testimony below about three minutes.

Refer to experiences that most people have in common. If you've been high-jacked by a terrorist, don't tell that story. Very few people have been high-jacked by terrorists. 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. "Now that I became a Christian, my life is perfect. Everybody loves me and I'm wonderful." They don't believe that and you know it's not the truth. Don't imply that all your problems ended at conversion.

Spend most of your time on Part Four, the difference Christ has made. Emphasize why you received Christ, the benefits of doing it. Always mention the benefit of being certain of your destiny when you die. Why? Because of this: Although we have different benefits and come to Christ for different reasons, everybody needs to know for certain where they're going when they die. That's a universal need everybody has.

Don't brag about pre-conversion sins. Don't over exaggerate them, either. Don't make negative remarks about other religions or people. Don't even mention any denomination.

If somebody you're sharing your witness with says, "I'm a Catholic." Say, "That's great! There are two kinds of Catholics: those who know for sure they're going to heaven and those who aren't sure. Which are you?" or "I'm a Baptist." "That's great! There are two kinds of Baptists. Those who know they're going to heaven and those who aren't really sure. Which one are you?" You don't get hung up. You don't ever let a religious title close the door. Like, "I'm Jewish!" "Great! There's two kinds of Jewish people, those who know for sure they're going to heaven and those who aren't real sure. Which one are you?" Just go back to that issue.

Don't answer a lot of 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 and names and ages. Why? It doesn't matter to them. Be prepared. Practice it until it feels and sounds natural. Read it aloud, edit it to make it conversational.

Let a friend read it and make suggestions. Speak casually and informally. You don't change your voice. Don't dramatize or embellish your story.

Don't share mystical experiences. You may have had a flat out, genuine miracle in your life but if you start with that, people's barriers will go up immediately. Speak to them on their level of spiritual maturity, not your level.

Don't talk down to people. Don't sound preachy. Use the words "I", "me", and "my," not "you."

Use humor in your testimony. It reduces tension. It relaxes people. Smile! Most important of all, choose a central theme. (Possible themes are listed on page 4 in your notes).

God specifically allows certain experiences in your life so that you can help others who need Christ. There are all kinds of people with all kinds of problems. Given this, God allows us, as Christians, to go through all kinds of problems so that we can relate to unbelievers and share Christ with them. Testimony is one way that we can have common ground with other people.

Testimonies can either be about positive things that have happened in your life or negative things. Either one. It could be an adoption, breaking a bad habit, financial gain, raising kids, new friends, new home, new marriage, restored relationship, new job. Or it could negative: abuse, accidents, addictions, abortion, bankruptcy, divorce, financial problems, surgery...

This is one of the first steps in your life mission, identifying what are the circumstances that God has brought into your life and can use to help other people.

Have you figured out that you have more than one testimony? That was one of the purposes for this. Many people think, "My testimony is how I became a Christian, where I was – a church, a camp, a Bible study, with a friend – I accepted Christ and prayed this. And that's my story." No. You have hundreds of testimonies.

How many of you have a financial problem testimony? How many of you have had a relational problem testimony? How many of you have had a health problem testimony? We can go on and on and on. You have lots of different testimonies that God's done in your life.

Different situations require different testimonies. You want to choose a testimony that best matches your listener. You need to realize that you can share other people's testimonies saying, "I have a friend who..." that relates to a person's life. Wouldn't it be neat if other people were telling your story and people were coming to Christ because of your story? You don't have to be the only one to tell your story.

### **Consider the Cliché-Lexicon, Translating Christian Words into Real Words—**

Don't use religious terms or clichés or broad generalities. Ask, "If I were an unbeliever would this make sense to me?" For example, don't say, "I was blessed." What in the world does that mean? Can anyone describe what a blessing is? Say, "I was happy." Don't say, "I was born again." They might say, "Were you reincarnated?" Say, "I was given a fresh new start." Don't say, "I was saved." They'd say, "Were you drowning?" Say, "My life changed at that moment."

Even to say, "Jesus is my Lord," people don't know what that means. We don't have lords and ladies, kings and queens, counts and vassals and serfs. We don't go around saying, "My lord." You may want your wife to say it to you, but she's not going to so forget it! Instead of saying, "Jesus is my Lord" say, "He's the leader of my life... He's the CEO." Don't say, "I repented" because they think of a guy holding a sign saying, "Turn or burn!" Say, "I changed my mind" or "I made a mental U-turn" because that's what the word "*metanoia*" in Greek means.

Even to say, "I sinned," can be confusing. Why? Because people define sin differently. Rick Warren tells of one man who believed that not saluting the American flag was a sin for him.

So it may be best to say, "I knew I'd blown it." Instead of saying, "All are sinners," say, "Nobody's perfect..." If you call somebody a sinner they put their defenses up. If you say, "Nobody bats 1000," everybody agrees with that. Don't say, "I felt convicted." They'd say, "Did you serve time?" Say, "I realized that..."

### **Three Keys to Leading into Your Testimony:**

**1. Listen for problems or needs that Jesus has helped you with.** Circle "listen". Some people tend to treat their testimony, less like a testimony and more like a club. It's not scalps that we're after but souls. That's why we have to begin by listening, listening to the problems and the needs that folks are expressing around us. Here's a great example: "That used to be a big issue in my life too. I felt pretty hopeless. Then I found something that made a major difference..."

**2. Refer to something in the news or something current in TV that deals with a common need or problem.** "Did you read about.... I can sure identify with that and how people feel. It wasn't that long ago that I struggled in that same area too. Then something happened that changed things in my life." Start with a statement that they'd agree with and a situation they can relate to. Examples: "Sometimes life just gets so complicated..." "Life doesn't always turn out the way we planned it or expected it." Who can't agree with that?

**3. You may want to lead in by simply apologizing. Apologizing to people that you've known for a long time that you've never had the courage or you've never had the time to share Christ with.** Example: "Bill, I just need to stop and apologize to you. We've known each other for a long time and I consider you to be a very 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 what you'd think...." Then share your faith story.

Thanks for reading this "Faith Story Information Kit" material. Please reflect and respond to the questions found on the preceding worksheet pages. Then begin to write your faith story.

May God bless you as you grow in your witness for Christ! - Pastor Gary Bruland