

EQUIPPED

DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM

03. TESTIMONY

The next step to being an Equipped Disciple is knowing your story and how to share it.

LEARN IT!

Choose one of the following primary resources to learn to share your testimony. Then feel free to take a look at the supplemental resources to go deeper and learn more.

PRIMARY RESOURCE

How to Write Your Own Testimony

Telling Your Story

LIVE IT!

Now it is time to share your testimony with others. We encourage you to take the following challenge before moving onto the next section of this resource.

Share your testimony with one other person.

It's always good to go to God's Word, the ultimate source. In addition to the resources listed, we have collected these Scripture passages on sharing your testimony.

Acts 26:2-29

Acts 24:10-16; 24:24

Acts 21:37-22:21

John 4:39-42

John 9:24-34

Galatians 1:13-2:21

Titus 3:3-7

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TELLING YOUR STORY

“For in my tradition, as a Jew, I believe that whatever we receive we must share. When we endure an experience, the experience cannot stay with me alone. It must be opened, it must become an offering, it must be deepened and given and shared.”

- Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor and author

Before and during the Olympics, we are often captivated by such personal interest stories about unique athletes. We are drawn in by their family backgrounds, their circumstances and decisions that allowed them to be high-level athletes. It places their sport experiences into a real-life dramas.

Story-telling is a predominate method of communication around the world, simply because people relate to stories. When the story is delivered well, people tend to judge it as authentic and believe it.

Your Christian testimony is just that — an authentic story of the circumstances, views, people and decisions surrounding your response to God’s work in your life. **The goal of this lesson is to learn how to effectively communicate how God has changed and continues to change your life.**

ENGAGE

Your testimony is living proof that God has and continues to work in your life. Whether you came to Christ when you were young or not until recently, God has given you a life story to encourage your own faith and the faith of others. Pick one word to describe your life before knowing Christ and one word to describe your life after trusting Him. Share your answers with someone.

Using the questions below, write down the thoughts that come to your mind when you consider your own spiritual journey. If you are in a group, it can be helpful to share your thoughts out loud with another person.

What were you like before knowing God? How did you think about God, yourself, others? What were some of your “appetites” that you attempted to fulfill?

What did God do to open your heart to Him? What people and events have significantly affected your life, positively and negatively? What was it about God that attracted you? When did the gospel message start to make sense?

After trusting Christ for forgiveness and freedom, how did your “appetites” begin to change? Do you have different values, priorities or relationships?

What does it mean for you to walk with God today? How does He intersect your everyday activities?

Do you see a theme that might summarize your journey or thoughts?

EXPLORE

- Read the apostle Paul’s testimony in Acts 25:23-26:32.
- Describe the setting in which Paul finds himself in 25:23-27. How would you feel if you were in a similar situation?
 - What is Paul's attitude in 26:2? Why is this significant as you prepare to share your story with others?
 - In 26:4-11, record what you learn about Paul's past. How does he transition to his new life in Christ?
 - What are the elements of the gospel proclaimed in 26:22-23?

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E. After Festus accused Paul of being “crazy,” how did Paul demonstrate his confidence in the gospel and his new life (26:27-29)?

F. In general, what are the different responses to Paul’s testimony in 26:25-32?

EXAMPLE

Everyone’s spiritual journey looks different — we come to Christ from many different directions and in many different ways. However our stories unfold, whatever our theological understanding of what happened in our lives, we should strive to clearly communicate the elements of the gospel to people so that they understand how to trust Christ with their lives.

The gospel story involves an awareness of sin, God’s initiation toward us, a moment of surrender, and continued growth along the way. While we may all use different language to describe these parts and how we came to understand them, we need to help others understand the core of the gospel as clearly as possible. Each interaction with another human being is unique and may draw out different aspects of our spiritual story, but as God leads and circumstances allow, we want to make clear why a person needs Christ, how a person trusts Christ, and what it looks like to walk with Christ.

Read the following sample testimonies and identify where you see the ideas of sin, forgiveness, acceptance, and other aspects of the gospel. What drew you into their stories?

CRYSTAL’S TESTIMONY

I call myself a builder. Throughout my life I built many walls behind which I sought refuge. I had heard about God and Jesus, but experienced hypocrisy in

the church early on, causing me to believe it was a place where bad things happened. As a result I built a protective wall to keep people away from me. I saw God as someone who was supposed to be a good guy that I should pray to and hope He would answer in my favor, but did not seek to know Him personally. Growing up people called me “Tuff,” and I was being tough! My brother said I had to be stoic and strong to make it. We never shared hugs, emotions or “I love you”. I became a really good athlete that everyone saw as tough and emotionless. I was the MVP of whatever I played. No one knew about the wall I had built and why I disliked God and the church. I continued to orchestrate my life how I wanted and shut people out except my dad and brother.

My dad, who I was very close with, passed away from heart failure my senior year of high school. Immediately, I built another wall bigger than the first one. I questioned the existence and character of God. If there is a God, and He is supposed to be good, then why did He take my dad away at the age of 49? No one could tell me anything about Christianity at this point in my life. The very next year when I was a freshman in college, my brother, whom I also thought the world of, went to jail. As you can imagine, I built another wall to completely shield myself from the outside world. I talked to no one, and the comfort I had found in sports was no longer enough to make me happy. I knew I needed something bigger than competition. Though I had tried to mask my hurts with sports, people, video games and clubs, they did not fulfill me any longer. In my dorm room one night I fell to my knees and asked Jesus to come in and take over, breaking down all the walls I had built between us. Out of desperation, I told Him I could not live this way and go through life on my own any longer. I cried out for His help.

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Since then things have not been easy. But the difference is that I no longer build walls and shut people out of my life in order to protect myself. I have learned that Jesus is who He says He is: my protector and my comforter. Now when times are tough and I am faced with challenging situations, I trust that He has it all in control. I no longer try to protect myself from those things or worry when I pray. I trust Him to meet my needs, rather than relying on my self-effort.

With God as my protector, I live more freely and have less anxiety about the future. I feel different and worry-free when I trust and believe that God will take care of me. I lean on Him every day because He is my strength, and there is nothing He cannot do!

As I begin a pro basketball career overseas, I am reminded that I now play for an audience of One. I want to stay focused on my real purpose: to glorify God. I need Him to keep my sanity, because I am a long way from my family, friends and fiancé. Three things help me focus on God in the midst of competing: Praying for my performance on and off the court to glorify Him, that the basketball court will serve as a place I can worship through my talents, and praising God for helping me to play to the best of my ability. These reminders help me focus my heart and efforts on the fact that God is my audience — whether I am playing basketball or living life.

LORENZO ROMAR'S TESTIMONY

Points. That's all I cared about growing up — putting points on the scoreboard and earning points with God. Obeying my parents, that was good for two. Helping a friend, field goal. Going to church, slam dunk. My obsession with scoring points continued into the NBA. Lacking exceptional ability, I had to work twice

as hard as everyone else. But I didn't care; I was just happy to be there!

One day in the midst of this striving, I sat down with the Bible — a rare moment. Four hours later, I read a passage that startled me. It said that no matter how good I tried to be — no matter how many points I tried to score with God, His standard would always be out of reach. In that moment, I wanted to give up. If my best wasn't good enough for God, what was?

As I continued reading, my dejection turned to excitement. I learned that God knew I wasn't good enough, so He sent Jesus to die in my place. I didn't have to do anything to win God over. Jesus had taken care of that. All I had to do was believe.

Oddly enough, my life became harder, not easier, after I became a Christian. But I'm thankful to know that whether I experience failure or success, God always has my back. Furthermore, my win/loss record has zero bearing on my status with Him. God loves me for who I am, not what I do. And He loves you just the same.

EXPERIENCE

Do you find it hard to jump from general conversation to more meaningful, spiritual conversation? Most people find this hurdle too large to leap. However, if you become familiar with the S.H.A.R.E. acrostic below, you will not only express interest in the person with whom you are communicating, but also provide initiative and direction for the conversation.

Practice using the following acrostic S.H.A.R.E. as you interact with people. This acrostic is a useful way to move from initial conversation to more meaningful topics.

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- S** Secular ... talk about events/people, what's going on in community, world, etc.
- H** Home life ... ask where they are from, parents, siblings, etc.
- A** Attitudes ... see what they think or feel about something in the news or personal.
- R** Religious background ... worship or church, celebrations, traditions, etc.
- E** Experience with God ... spiritual experiences, retreats, enlightenment, etc.

Practice good communication skills using the S.H.A.R.E. acrostic on a daily basis.

Look for opportunities in conversations to share all or part of your testimony.

Ask the person you are talking with to share their journey. Listen as they share.

Memorize Acts 20:24.

EXCEL

“The people who know their God will display strength and take action (Daniel 11:32 NASB).” Commit yourself to act on what God is prompting you to do.

PRAYER:

Thank God for who He is, and then bring your requests to Him.

Thank you that I can call you Abba, Father. You have shown me grace and have changed my life forever. Because of Your work in my life, I can now testify to others of Your great love and mercy. Please help me to be a positive witness in my own Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and everywhere You take me in this world. May Your light shine in my competition, my work place, my home, among my family and friends, and may the words You give me be kind, gracious, and seasoned with salt. Lord, like Paul, I desire to testify to the gospel of the grace of God through the leading and power of the Holy Spirit.