

Giving Your Testimony

Sharing the account of how the Lord saved you

The Significance of Public Testimony

It is only natural for us, having been saved from our sins, to want to speak of it to others. Yet, often it is an exercise done without much thought. Here is some practical ways to consider as you share the personal history of your own conversion.

Three Stages of Life

Think of your entire life as three stages.

The first stage of life starts at your conception and continues until the Lord saves you. This stage of your life is the "Before Christ" stage. In it you lived your life and experienced many things, but all while spiritually driven by your desires, this world, and your own ways. There might have been significant ups and downs, perhaps even various spiritual experiences. But the Lord had not yet made you spiritually alive; your sins were still unforgiven.

Then there was the stage of your life that surrounded the moment of conversion. Being born again by the Spirit of God is an instantaneous moment, but it is still helpful to think of the events and experiences surrounding it. This is particularly true if you perhaps cannot pinpoint the particular moment of conversion.

The third stage of your life is then the life since conversion. This is the period of spiritual growth in knowledge of God and His Word, and in obedience and godliness.

As you get opportunity to share the account of your new birth, consider each stage and say something about each stage. You might have more to say about one stage than another perhaps, and you also cannot always share everything, but by testifying to the Lord's work in terms of these three stages, your testimony will be more clear and helpful to those who hear.

Two Parts to Every Stage

Within each of the three stages, it is of profound significance to consider both the external and the internal parts—the physical and the spiritual, the life experiences and the soul's experiences. The physical, or external, parts are the story parts of your life. The spiritual, or internal, parts are the works of God as explained in the Scriptures. You might reference the physical/external with timestamps in your history, but the spiritual/internal are referenced with Bible verses.

For example, in the first stage you might speak of your childhood and former sins. Your childhood might contain circumstantial stories unique to your upbringing. But your former sins will, at least in general terms, sound exactly like everyone else's conversion story. Likewise with the second stage of your life—the stage surrounding your conversion. There might be people who prayed for you, or events where you learned the Gospel—those are the external things. But then there was also the repentance of sin and the love of God that were internal realities. The same for your life now as a Christian—no doubt there have been external reforms in your life, but so also internal growth and spiritual convictions.

The point is this. As you consider each stage of your life, tell of both the physical and the spiritual. You wouldn't want all who hear to know all the sad and happy stories of your life that might be unique to you, without hearing of the spiritual truths that are common to all who have been saved. Likewise you wouldn't want all to hear a thorough theological treatise on how salvation is accomplished by God among mankind, without them also hearing of what it looked like in the course of your life.

Clarity on the Gospel Matters

The three stages of your life, retold in terms of both the physical and the spiritual, is a way to clarify to all how God saved you. Clarity on the Gospel matters, and your testimony is a godly opportunity to draw friends, family, and even strangers in to the glories of God's Work in the life of another sinner-turned-saint.

Examples of Conversion Stories

Acts 26:4-23 Paul

Note the three stages and two parts

- Stage 1:** vv4-11
mostly **physical/external**,
with **spiritual** heart issues in v5 and v9
- Stage 2:** vv12-18
initially the **external** factors,
but then the **spiritual** realisations of who Jesus is (v15)
and what Jesus requires of him (vv16-18)
- Stage 3:** vv19-23
the **internal** lessons of obedience (vv19-20), God's faithfulness (v22)
and his Gospel preaching (vv22-23)
with a brief mention of some **external** circumstances in v21.

Daniel 4:1-37 Nebuchadnezzar

- Stage 1:** vv4-33
mostly **physical/external**
with an exposé of his **spiritual** condition in vv25-27
- Stage 2:** vv34-36
mostly **spiritual/internal** realisation of who God truly is,
with v36 explaining the **external** changes
- Stage 3:** v37 and vv1-3
the testimony in v37 of **spiritual** reform in his own heart
that produced this **external** act of proclamation to the whole nation in vv1-3)