

Appendix G

Preparing a Personal Testimony

(Some of this material is adapted from The Navigators' 2:7 Series Book 2: *Deepening Your Roots in God's Family* and the *CoMission Training Manual*.)

The apostle Peter challenges us: *"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). One of the most effective tools you have for sharing your faith is the story of how Jesus Christ gave you eternal life and how He has enriched your life. The Apostle John wrote, *"We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard"* (1 John 1:3). John was testifying about his relationship to Jesus Christ.

When the apostle Paul stood before King Agrippa (Acts 26), he spoke simply, logically, and clearly about his life before salvation, how he met Christ, and what his life was like after conversion. Paul's testimony takes three or four minutes to read aloud in a conversational manner.

Although you will be writing your testimony, the purpose is not to memorize it and give it word-for-word. The purpose is to help you put into words some of the important and interesting details of your conversion. The choice of the right words, the flow of your story, and knowing how to begin and how to end are all important.

As you begin this project, ask the Lord for wisdom and insight into just how to share your story. Many have come to Christ simply because people like you and those you are helping have sharpened their testimony. It is one way to *"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).

Here are some tips, as you begin to write your testimony (story):

- Ask God to give you wisdom and guidance as you prepare your testimony (story).
- Review the S-T-O-R-Y suggestions from Step Thirteen.
 - **S**imple, easy to understand, not a lot of "religious" words.
 - **T**wo to three minutes long so that people will listen to what you are saying.
 - **O**n Christ; keep your focus on Jesus and highlight what He has done for you.
 - **R**emember to use the Bible, a key verse will add power to your story.
 - **Y**ou! Make it personal; don't preach. Use "I," "me," and "my."
- Use some of the following questions to get you started on the three parts of your story.

MY LIFE BEFORE CHRIST:

- At the time you decided to follow Jesus, what were your thoughts? needs? problems? joys? hopes?
- How did you feel about your life at that time? What in your life was most important to you?
- What are some of the ways you looked for happiness, peace of mind, and significance?
- In what ways did you find your life was not satisfying?

HOW I CAME TO FOLLOW CHRIST:

- What led to your decision to follow Jesus? Why did you decide to give Him control of your life, and how did you make this decision?
- When and how did you first hear about Jesus' love and forgiveness?

- What were your first reactions to Jesus?
- When did you begin to have a positive attitude toward Jesus? Why?
- What was the turning point in making your decision to follow Jesus?
- What barriers or hindrances to faith in Jesus did you experience?
- How did you actually receive Jesus and commit your life to Him?

MY LIFE SINCE I DECIDED TO FOLLOW CHRIST:

- What happened after you received Jesus and decided to follow Him?
- How long before you noticed some change or difference in your life?
- What are some specific examples of how God worked in your life, actions, and attitudes?

An example of a person's story:

BEFORE: Have you ever tried to fill your life with things to make you happy? That was my goal in life for years. My divorced parents and brother had tried to be happy, so I followed their example. I went from living a wild life to a religious life to a party life to an "anything goes" life, but all I really had was an empty life and a lonely life and this was all leading, very possibly, to a short life! I pretended to be happy "on the outside," but I was miserable on the inside.

HOW: One day in April, I went to a dinner where a comedian was going to be present. He was great! I hadn't laughed so hard for a long time. But when he was finished, another person got up and started talking about God and Jesus and the Bible. He said that Jesus had promised to give a full and "abundant life" to those who believed in Him as well as "eternal life" after we died. This was the kind of "real life" I had been trying to find for several years.

After the meeting, I talked with the speaker. He asked me if I knew what to do to receive Jesus and the abundant and eternal life Jesus promised. I said, "No!" He turned to a statement in the Bible that said, "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life." He explained that I needed to talk to God about this, so I prayed right then, "God, I've tried everything else and those things haven't satisfied me, so I'll give you a try. I'm serious about following You, but if You don't give me an 'abundant life,' I'll have to go on to something else. Please forgive me of my sins, come into my life and take over, and help me to follow Jesus."

SINCE: That was more than 25 years ago, and I haven't had to "go on to something else!" When I prayed that prayer, I didn't feel different, but, little by little, I noticed changes. God took away my burden of guilt for the wrong things I had done in my life. I enjoyed reading the Bible and trying to live by its teachings. Problems didn't suddenly disappear, but God helped to heal many broken relationships, and He helped me to get through many hard times. In fact, even when I was feeling miserable "on the outside," God often gave me real joy and peace "on the inside"! Experiencing God's love and forgiveness and following Jesus as my Savior has given me the "abundant and fulfilled life" that I so desperately wanted so many years ago. In fact, just yesterday . . .

Can you see that some of the suggestions from the previous page have been included in this person's story? Any ideas on how to improve the story's effectiveness? You can show this example to your group, and they can answer these questions too.

The stories you and your group members write down may be more brief. Two or three sentences in each part of the testimony is a great beginning! You can help "sharpen one another" as you tell your stories to each other and as God gives you opportunities to talk with others.