



BAPTISM TESTIMONY

Just moments before you are baptized, you will give a testimony to a public audience. Like most people, you may be afraid to speak in public, but don't let the fear hold you back. Since baptism is an act of public proclamation, it is appropriate to share with the public witnessing your baptism why you are being baptized. In this paper, you will be walked through some basics about your baptism testimony to prepare you for the big day - your baptism.

Before entering the water, a pastor will explain to the audience the meaning of baptism. Since you have read the booklet on baptism ("Baptism: What Can We Agree On?"), you should understand the meaning. Baptism is an act of obedience for a Christian to show that they are believer, having been cleansed of their sin and welcomed into the church, God's people. We don't want to assume that everyone knows this about baptism, so it will be explained. After a brief explanation from a pastor or his designate, you will be invited to enter the water (in some cases you may already be standing there). A pastor will then introduce you to the audience (e.g. "This is Bill, a sinner saved by grace, who comes to be baptized today"). After briefly introducing you, it will be time for you to share your testimony to everyone in about 3-6 minutes.¹

What is a testimony?

A testimony is the re-telling of how you came to realize that you were a sinner and that Jesus Christ was the only one who could save you from the penalty and power of your sins. Your testimony is the story of how God saved you when you came to trust His one and only son, Jesus Christ, personally as Lord and Savior. In a testimony you want to make very clear what is sin, who is Jesus and how He alone solves humanity's problem with sin by His atoning death and resurrection.

Testimonies are extremely powerful. As Christians giving testimony of Jesus is an incredible privilege. We are called to give testimony of Jesus to the entire world. The Christian faith is a testifying faith. The Bible says, "If you confess [that is, testify] with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

A testimony shares how the story of Jesus has merged with the story of your life. The world may argue about the truth of the story of Jesus, but they cannot argue with you and your story - it's yours. And because of this, a testimony is a powerful way to point people to the story of Jesus. For example, a guy may doubt the story of Jesus, but he cannot doubt that his close friend has changed after becoming a Christian.

In a testimony you want to share 4 basic things: (1) Your life before Jesus, (2) How you heard the gospel of Jesus making clear the message and identity of Jesus Christ, (3) when you received Jesus Christ and (4) how your life has changed as a result of knowing Jesus. Just think of it like our dating system BC and AD, that is, before Christ and after Christ (AD comes from the Latin phrase *Anno Domini*, meaning in the year of our Lord). So, the four steps look like this:

| | | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|-------------------------|--|
| 1. | 2. | Your Salvation  | 3. | 4. |
| Your Life Before Jesus | How you heard the gospel of Jesus | | When you received Jesus | How your life has changed because of Jesus |
| <i>BC: Before Jesus</i> | | | <i>AD: After Jesus</i> | |

¹ The time allotted can fluctuate depending on how many people are going to be baptized and other things going on in the church worship service. Talk to a pastor about the time allotted if you need more or think you can do with less, we want to be flexible to the Spirit of God and let your testimony have maximum impact.

With this picture in mind, let's look at these 4 basic things in more detail. To help you write your testimony, there are some basic questions to consider for each of these steps. Additionally, there are some basic biblical ideas to communicate as well. Use the following outline as a tool to write out your testimony.

(1) Your life before Jesus

- What did my life revolve around?
- What issues or things were important to me?
- What did I think of God? Of Jesus?
- On what did I rely for security and happiness?

Make clear: What is sin?

Sin is any deed violating God or His law, including even the desire to violate with our thoughts or words. Sin is not just something we do (whether it's in thought, word or deed), it is also what we fail to do, meaning when we omit doing, thinking or speaking what is right in God's eyes. Sin is inborn to humans, so we are all criminals against God's law on the run awaiting judgment for our sin. The punishment of sin is death and eternal separation from God. No amount of goodness, religion, spirituality or any kind of works can save us from the penalty of sin, because God is just.

(2) How you heard the gospel of Jesus (make clear His message and identity). ²

- Where were you when you heard the gospel? Alone in your room? Driving in your car? At a church service?
- What did you think when you heard that Jesus was the only true way for salvation and life?
- What did you think when you heard that God was three persons in one being (Father, Son and Spirit) and that Jesus was God's Son, fully God and fully man?
- What did you think when you heard that you were a sinner, separated from God and awaiting punishment, condemnation and hell because of your sin?

Make clear: What is the gospel?

The gospel is the good news that those who trust Jesus alone by faith alone will be saved from the penalty and power of their sins. The gospel offers enemies with God the means to become children of God, through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead. Jesus gives us forgiveness for ALL of our sins (past, present and future) if we trust Him.

Make clear: Who is Jesus?

Jesus is fully God and fully man. He is the incarnate Son of God. There is one God, who exists in three persons: Father, Son and Spirit. The Son became a full human, Jesus, in order to live the life we could not live and pay the price the

(3) When you received Jesus Christ

- Where were you in when God saved you and you received Jesus?
- What thoughts went through your mind?
- What feelings did you struggle with just before your decision?
- How did you yield your life to Christ? What did you say?

Make clear: Jesus is the only way.

There is only way to come to God - its Jesus! On the cross, Jesus died as a substitute for our sins. Without Jesus we would still be dead in our sins. There is no other way to God. Jesus rose from the dead, proving Himself and the sacrifice He made - it was acceptable to the Father.

(4) How your life has changed as a result of knowing Jesus.

² At the end of this document, there is a brief (3 page) overview of Jesus and the gospel to help you.

● Did you lose friendships because of your faith in Christ? Do you share the gospel with your friends/family?

● Did you struggle with your faith? How did you overcome that struggle?

● Did you experience a new power over sin and a new vision of life?

● How are you different than you were before?

Make clear: There is power in Jesus.

The same power that rose Jesus from the dead has filled our lives. Jesus gives us power to say no to sin and to enjoy the living God. While we were once slaves to sin, we have been set free. Satan and all darkness was defeated by the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus not only offers us the hope of heaven, but He offers us life today.

(If you have waited a long time to be baptized, it is good to explain why. Baptism is meant to proclaim our new faith in Christ. It is an act that is designed to occur shortly after one's salvation. If you procrastinated on it, explain why, it may help new believers take this vital next step).

Giving a testimony is (or should be) as natural to a Christian as breathing air is to a human. Indeed, it is the privilege and responsibility of the Christian to share with others our faith in Christ. The great thing about a testimony is that it belongs to you and God. It is unique and personal. Many people will try to argue against Christianity, claiming that it is not true. However, a testimony is something that even a hostile listener cannot deny. If you say "My faith in Christ has changed my life" a person cannot argue with that (assuming you are not a hypocrite, of course). Your testimony is your experience. Ultimately we want to offer more than an experience to people, but this is a good start. It is important that Christians defend the faith, using evangelistic tools and apologetic reasoning. The skills and knowledge for defending the Christian faith takes time, but giving a testimony is a good start and a very powerful start!

TESTIMONY BIBLE STUDY

The idea of giving a testimony is very biblical. Grab a Bible and let's study an example of a testimony given by the Apostle Paul. Of course, no one is born as a Christian. We are all born sinners and we have to be born again. As Jesus said in John 3:3, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." There is a tendency to think that the Apostles always had it together and were somehow always holy. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Apostle Paul lived such a radically different life before Christ. In fact, he even had a different name. Before his conversion, Paul was known as Saul. Saul was a wicked man who actually killed Christians. Jesus grabbed a hold of Saul and by the power of the gospel he became the great Apostle Paul. As a believer, Paul often gave his testimony to share Christ with others. The 26th chapter of the book of Acts records an occasion where Paul shared his testimony.

Turn to Acts 26 and read verses 1 thru 23. Now let's dissect Paul's testimony. Notice how it breaks down and answer the below questions:

- Paul's attitudes and actions before conversion (see verses 1-11)
 - He lived as a Pharisee (verse 5, Galatians 1:13-14)
 - He imprisoned and put to death many Christians (verse 10)
 - He persecuted Christians (verse 11)
- Circumstances around Paul's encounter with Christ and His conversion to Christianity (see verses 12-18)
 1. Where was Paul going? _____
 2. What time was it? _____
 3. What did Paul see? _____
 4. Who was with Paul? _____
 5. What did Paul hear? _____
- Changes in Paul's life after conversion (verses 19-23)
 - What evidence of Paul's repentance and conversion can be found in the following verses?
 - 6. Verse 19 _____

7. Verse 20 _____
 8. Verse 21 _____
 9. Verses 22-23 _____
 (With all of this in mind read 1 John 1:5-9; 2:3-6)

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|---|--|---|---|--|
| 1. | 2. | Paul's Salvation  | 3. | 4. |
| Paul's Life Before Jesus | How Paul heard the gospel of Jesus | | When Paul received Jesus | How Paul's life has changed because of Jesus |
| <i>BC: Before Jesus</i> | | | <i>AD: After Jesus</i> | |
| <i>T h e B o o k o f A c t s 2 6 : 1 - 2 3</i> | | | | |
| Paul Before His Conversion | Circumstances around Paul's encounter with Christ and His conversion to Christianity | | Changes in Paul's life after conversion | |
| Acts 26:1-11 | Acts 26:12-18 | | Acts 26:19-23 | |

Now that you have went over the above four steps of a testimony it's your turn. Before you begin writing, go over the following do's and dont's. These are helpful to keep in mind as you prepare.

Do's and Don'ts of a personal testimony:

Do

1. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom and guidance as you write (James 1:5-6).
2. Follow the four-part outline shown above.
3. Emphasize Jesus, His identity, message and power. Your testimony should draw attention to Jesus and no one else.
4. Begin with an interesting, attention-getting sentence and close with a strong conclusion. Make sure you tie everything together with the gospel.
5. Speak in such a way that others will feel associated with you in past and present experiences. Talk about things others can relate to.
6. Keep your testimony focused, refraining from irrelevant details.
7. Use Scripture verses (at least one) or refer to them (but not too many, it's not a sermon).
8. Have another Christian listen to your testimony. Go over your testimony with the pastor baptizing you. Welcome their comments, even if some of those are critical. It may be difficult to accept criticism, but seeking sincere feedback is a sign of wisdom.

Don't Do

1. Don't use Christian "jargon" without explaining what you mean. For instance, if you say "I became converted by the blood of the lamb." A non-Christian may be totally lost and think you hit a lamb with your convertible. Though these words and phrases are precious to us, they are often misunderstood and consequently they lose power to those who we want to know the power of Christ.
2. Don't be too wordy, beat around the bush, or emphasize how bad you used to be. People feel uncomfortable if you dwell on it. You do not want to glorify sin, or laugh at it, or treat sin lightly.
3. Don't give the impression that the Christian life is a "bed of roses." Being a Christian can be hard. Be real. (If it is rosey, that's cool too, then forget what I just said and be rosey).
4. Don't preach a sermon. It is a testimony, not a "preachimony."
5. Don't turn Jesus into an aspirin. Many people make Jesus sound like a pill you can swallow that will make all problems go away. Jesus is God in the flesh. The gospel is not, "Believe and God will make you happy" - that's an aspirin. Jesus saves us from the wrath of God and gives us new life - it's so much more.
6. Don't shy away from talking about hell or other tough theological issues.
7. Don't glamorize sin, by retelling all of the details of your past or making them humorous. Jesus died for our sin - it's not funny.
8. Don't say things that are inappropriate. For example, if children are in the audience be sensitive to that and censor your testimony or request in advance to the pastor that children should not hear it.

Okay, now it is your turn. Grab a Bible. Take out some paper and begin. Write your testimony prayerfully and thoughtfully for God's glory! When you are finished, practice saying your testimony and time it. Remember, it should be 3-6 minutes long. You can feel free to write notes cards and use them if you like (in fact, that can be quite helpful).

"Who do you think that I am?" - Jesus



With that brief question Jesus Christ confronted His followers with the most important issue they would ever face. He had spent much time with them and made some bold claims about His identity and authority. Now the time had come for them either to believe or deny His teachings.

Who do *you* say Jesus is? Your response to Him will determine not only your values and lifestyle, but your eternal destiny as well. Consider what the Bible says about Him

JESUS IS GOD

While Jesus was on earth there was much confusion about who He was. Some thought He was a wise man or a great prophet. Others thought He was a madman. Still others couldn't decide or didn't care. But Jesus said, "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). That means He claimed to be nothing less than God in human flesh.

Many people today don't understand that Jesus claimed to be God. They're content to think of Him as little more than a great moral teacher. But even His enemies understood His claims to deity. That's why they tried to stone Him to death (John 5:18; 10:33) and eventually had Him crucified (John 19:7).

C.S. Lewis observed, "You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to" (*Mere Christianity* [Macmillan, 1952], pp. 40-41).

If the biblical claims of Jesus are true, He is God!

JESUS IS HOLY

God is absolutely and perfectly holy (Isaiah 6:3), therefore He cannot commit or approve of evil (James 1:13).

As God, Jesus embodied every element of God's character. Colossians 2:9 says, "In Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form." He was perfectly holy (Hebrews 4:15). Even His enemies couldn't prove any accusation against Him (John 8:46)

God requires holiness of us as well. First Peter 1:16 says, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

JESUS IS THE SAVIOR

Our failure to obey God--to be holy--places us in danger of eternal punishment (2 Thessalonians 1:9). The truth is, we cannot obey Him because we have neither the desire nor the ability to do so. We are by nature rebellious toward God (Ephesians 2:1-3). The Bible calls our rebellion "sin."

According to Scripture, everyone is guilty of sin: "There is no man who does not sin" (1



Kings 8:46). "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). And we are incapable of changing our sinful condition. Jeremiah 13:23 says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil."

That doesn't mean we're incapable of performing acts of human kindness. We might even be involved in various religious or humanitarian activities. But we're utterly incapable of understanding, loving, or pleasing God on our own. The Bible says, "There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one" (Romans 3:10-12).



God's holiness and justice demand that all sin be punished by death: "The soul who sins will die" (Ezekiel 18:4). That's hard for us to understand because we tend to evaluate sin on a relative scale, assuming some sins are less serious than others. However, the Bible teaches that all acts of sin are the result of sinful thinking and evil desires. That's why simply changing our patterns of behavior can't solve our sin problem or eliminate its consequences. We need to be changed inwardly so our thinking and desires are holy

Jesus is the only one who can forgive and transform us, thereby delivering us from the power and penalty of sin: "There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Even though God's justice demands death for sin, His love has provided a Savior, who paid the penalty and died for sinners: "Christ ... died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). Christ's death satisfied the demands of God's justice, thereby enabling Him to forgive and save those who place their faith in Him (Romans 3:26). John 3:16 says, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life." He alone is "our great God and Savior" (Titus 2:13).



JESUS IS THE ONLY ACCEPTABLE OBJECT OF SAVING FAITH

Some people think it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere. But without a valid object your faith is useless

If you take poison--thinking it's medicine--all the faith in the world won't restore your life. Similarly, if Jesus is the only source of salvation, and you're trusting in anyone or anything else for your salvation, your faith is useless.



Many people assume there are many paths to God and that each religion represents an aspect of truth. But Jesus said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (John 14:6). He didn't claim to be one of many equally legitimate paths to God, or the way to God for His day only. He claimed to be the only way to God--then

and forever.

JESUS IS LORD

Contemporary thinking says man is the product of evolution. But the Bible says we were created by a personal God to love, serve, and enjoy endless fellowship with Him

The New Testament reveals it was Jesus Himself who created everything (John 1:3; Colossians 1:16). Therefore He also owns and rules everything (Psalm 103:19). That means He has authority over our lives and we owe Him absolute allegiance, obedience, and worship.

Romans 10:9 says, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved." Confessing Jesus as Lord means humbly submitting to His authority (Philippians 2:10-11). Believing that God has raised Him from the dead involves trusting in the historical fact of His resurrection--the pinnacle of Christian faith and the way the Father affirmed the deity and authority of the Son (Romans 1:4; Acts 17:30-31).



True faith is always accompanied by repentance from sin. Repentance is more than simply being sorry for sin. It is agreeing with God that you are sinful, confessing your sins to Him, and making a conscious choice to turn from sin and pursue holiness (Isaiah 55:7). Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15); and "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine" (John 8:31).

It isn't enough to believe certain facts about Christ. Even Satan and his demons believe in the true God (James 2:19), but they don't love and obey Him. Their faith is not genuine. True saving faith always responds in obedience (Ephesians 2:10).

Jesus is the sovereign Lord. When you obey Him you are acknowledging His lordship and submitting to His authority. That doesn't mean your obedience will always be perfect, but that is your goal. There is no area of your life that you withhold from Him.

JESUS IS THE JUDGE

All who reject Jesus as their Lord and Savior will one day face Him as their Judge: "God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).



Second Thessalonians 1:7-9 says, "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

HOW WILL YOU RESPOND?



Who does the Bible say Jesus is? The living God, the Holy One, the Savior, the only valid object of saving faith, the sovereign Lord, and the righteous Judge.

Who do you say Jesus is? That is the inescapable question. He alone can redeem you-- free you from the power and penalty of sin. He alone can transform you, restore you to fellowship with God, and give your life eternal purpose. Will you repent and believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?