

Giving Great Testimonies - Make Jesus the Hero

"They triumphed over him [devil] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death." Revelation 12:11 NIV

Make Jesus the Hero

One overarching rule of our Testimonies is to "make Jesus the hero". It's easy, especially when we get nervous in front of people to talk about ourselves and unintentionally detract from giving God the attention. There is a difference between saying "I decide to go out witnessing and prayed and they got healed" and saying "I felt like God wanted me to pray for her, so I obeyed, and God took her pain away!"

Share all testimonies in such a way that they glorify Jesus and not yourself. Share the testimony like the person is in the room. Upon hearing his own story, he should feel respected, honored, and appreciative of how accurately you retold the testimony. When you give your testimony, your audience should feel a sense of wonder at God, and what He has done. It shouldn't be difficult for them to find God in your story, because He's the main character!

Keeping the testimony

We recognize the importance of keeping the testimony: recording, repeating, declaring the great deeds of the Lord. In the Old Testament, God's people had various ways of keeping the testimony: the written Word of God; the Feasts of the Lord that commemorated His great deeds, such as Passover, which recalled the deliverance of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt; and other means, such as stones of remembrance (I Samuel 7). Today, we keep the testimony through our varied means of communication: word-of-mouth, TV, video, Internet and print media. We share the miracles and acts of God in our midst primarily to partner with and stay consistently conscious of the One who invades and transforms impossible situations. Keeping the testimony also gives Him glory and helps us to maintain a heart of thankfulness. Moreover, sharing a testimony releases the power of God to reproduce a like miracle. A testimony is like a seed that bears much fruit. When we testify, we get a harvest.

Give specifics, but don't over share

Be specific with details you have without filling in "the blanks" you don't have. Notice the difference between the following testimonies:

"Elizabeth's back was completely healed! OR

"Eight years ago, following a car accident, Elizabeth Smithton had three back surgeries but still had much pain and two metal rods in her back, which, of course, restricted her movement. She could not bend at the waist. Since receiving prayer, she can now bend and touch her toes without pain. When she touches her back, she can no longer feel the rods and screws as she could before. What was impossible to do, she can now do pain free."

The second is more accurate and supplies details. It adds no assumptions (like "the metal has disappeared"). It just gives the facts: who: Elizabeth Smithton. what: Surgeries couldn't stop the pain, metal rods. why: Car accident when: Eight years ago. after prayer: Can now miraculously bend, can't feel rods and screws, has no more pain.

Only report what happened that can be verified, such as "After receiving prayer, a woman could move her fingers freely without pain." She can't verify that her injury is completely healed but she can say she has mobility and is pain free or can do something now she couldn't do before. Say what you know is accurate and currently verifiable. When sharing a testimony, please include all the things that contributed to the healing. If a person is healed of cancer and also underwent chemotherapy or other treatments, please mention previous medical help in the testimony. It does not diminish the healing power of God. We love the healing grace, compassion and excellence regularly demonstrated by the medical community.

We don't need to "help" God out by sharing inflated stories about Him. He is the God of all truth so our truthful testimonies give Him the greatest honor. Honor others by being aware of your time constraints, a story that goes too long may limit others from sharing their testimonies. We honor God when we honor each other.

Be prepared but remain authentic

It's completely fine, and common to bring up a few notes with you if you are going to share a prepared testimony. It's common to get nervous and side-tracked while speaking in front of people so is wise to prepare your testimony with another person, and bring a few notes with you in case you get off course.

However, it's important to remain authentic and use language that is appropriate for your audience. If you are sharing in front of a mixed crowd of college students about how God healed someone, be cautious not to use language that would be unfamiliar to them. Overly-religious verbiage can be a distraction from the testimony and sometimes makes the audience feel out of place. Giving great Testimonies that honor Jesus will become natural to you as you continue to share testimonies.

Get Permission & Give Honor

If the testimony is about someone else, only mention the name of a person you ministered to when you have his/her permission to openly share the testimony. If you have permission, use their full name and you may want their contact info as well to follow up with them. Do not mention the name, position or title of a person whose job could be adversely affected as a result of your ministry and testimony.

Take care to preserve the honor of the people and ministries in your testimony. There may be someone from the church that you are referring to, so it's important not to make dishonoring generalizations about people, ministries, churches, etc. For example, if your parents are not Christian, we are still called to honor them, that includes our testimonies. Report mission and ministry trip testimonies with honor for the place you visited without making assumptions about the place or its people. You may quote what the people there have said about themselves or their nation (like "They said, 'Our people don't usually do this'") without making blanket statements about the whole country that are demeaning, such as, "It's a very dark place." or "They are not happy. It's such a depressed place." Just tell what Jesus did for them.

Do not give a public testimony about ministering to a famous person or campus employee. Be reluctant even in private as every phone is now a video camera and that testimony may end up on the web. We must keep the confidences of influential people God is entrusting us to minister to by not using their name and position to promote ourselves or even the Lord! Don't even ask permission. We do not want to undermine what God is doing in and through them by disclosing things they prefer to be kept discreet. Use wisdom and be trustworthy. Even vague testimonies can be researched if you provide details.

Use Wisdom

Follow the leading of the Holy Spirit about when to share a testimony and with whom. Sometimes Jesus told people to tell others what God had done for them:

"Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him. — Luke 8:39. But sometimes, for His own reasons, He asked them not to broadcast, but to do something else. In Mark 1:41-44, He asks the man not to mention what happened but to go to the priest and make the required offering as proof to them. A modern application might be to show proof by obtaining medical records, or in the case of really sensational healings, waiting until medical tests confirm them before publicly announcing them.

ACCURACY & SPECIFICS

1. Only say what you know is accurate and currently verifiable.
2. Mention previous medical help in the testimony.
3. Be specific with details you have without filling in "the blanks" you don't have.

PERMISSION

4. Only mention the name of a person you ministered to when you have his/her permission to openly share the testimony.
5. Please get written or filmed permission from those you film or photograph if you intend to post their photo or video on social networks or elsewhere online or to publish it in some other way.
6. Do not mention the name of a business where a testimony took place.
7. Do not mention the name, position or title of a person whose job could be adversely affected as a result of your ministry and testimony.

HONOR & WISDOM

8. Share all testimonies in such a way that they glorify Jesus and not yourself.
9. Share the testimony as if the person were in the room.
10. Report mission and ministry trip testimonies with honor for the place you visited without making assumptions about the place or its people.
11. Do not give a public testimony about ministering to a famous person or government official. Be reluctant even in private. Don't even ask their permission to share it.
12. Follow the leading of the Holy Spirit about when to share a testimony and with whom.

Some of these points are taken from a guide "Giving Great Testimonies" by Bethel Redding Church in Redding, California.