

## Guidelines for Writing “Your Story”

### *What to Do:*

- Ask God to give you wisdom.
- Make your story sound conversational, not academic or formal.
- Be warm and personal.
- Keep to a 3 minute limit. (That's about 650-700 words.)
- Be realistic, don't exaggerate.

### *What Not to Do:*

- Avoid statements that reflect negatively on any church organization.
- Avoid statements that reflect negatively on any individual.
- Avoid religious-sounding words, denominations, or church names.
- Avoid speaking / writing in a preachy manner. Say, “I” and “me,” not “you.”
- Avoid using vague terms like “joyful,” “peaceful,” or “changed” without explaining them.
- Avoid using religious terms like “saved,” “sin,” or “convicted” without explaining them.
- Avoid communicating that all your struggles and problems have now ended.

### **Writing Style:**

- Begin with an attention-getting sentence or incident.
- Be positive, accurate and specific – sharing a few key details will help arouse interest.
- Simplify – reduce the “clutter.” Mention a limited number of people and details.
- Use Bible verses directly related to your experience. But do not use the references. For example, say, “One of Jesus' disciples said...” rather than writing “1 John 5:11-13 says...” write things just as you would share with someone one-on-one.

*Remember:* Effective communication is brief, to the point, and clear. Sharing your story should not take more than 3 minutes. All right, now you're ready to write! Just answer the following questions:



### **Before Christ: Who were you before you met Jesus?**

Many people's actions spring out of their unsatisfied deep inner needs. What were one or two of your unsatisfied deep inner needs before you came to know Jesus? What were your attitudes, needs, and problems before you received Christ?

*Examples:* “I was seeking for...” “My life revolved around...” “I gained happiness and security from...” “My life was missing...” “My attitude was...” “My life was filled with problems I could not solve...” (Use an example from your personal life here. For instance, did your security come from money, your relationships, etc? Remember, avoid being overly sensational.)

Non-Christians are usually trying to satisfy their deep inner needs through unsatisfactory solutions. What unsatisfactory solutions did you use to attempt to meet those deep inner needs?

How did trying to meet your deep inner needs this way disappoint you? How was your life unfulfilling? How did you come to realize this? What were you struggling with (if anything) just before you received Christ?



### **Receiving Christ: How did Jesus change your life?**

This part of your personal testimony is where you come to the transition in your life, where God's work begins to become evident in you. Remember to follow the same guidelines as before. Describe the circumstances that caused you to consider Christ as the solution to your deep inner needs.

When and how did you first hear about and truly understand the story about Jesus? What were your struggles just before you received Christ?

State specifically the steps you took to become a follower of Jesus. Share truths about the gospel – that you realized you have disobeyed God, that you realized that you did not deserve His forgiveness, that you realized Christ died to forgive you, and that you realized your need to receive Jesus to be forgiven and to be changed forever.

You likely cannot remember exactly what you prayed when you received Christ. But sharing the idea of how you prayed might encourage someone else to express their faith in a similar way.

What happened when you received Christ? How and why did your attitudes and actions begin to change?

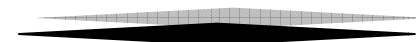
### **After receiving Christ: Who are you now?**

When giving a personal testimony, many people concentrate on the sin they had before they received Christ - even the sensationalism. However, an effective testimony focuses not on our sin, but on the work of the Holy Spirit in us, so that Jesus Christ takes center stage. It is at this point that your testimony really begins to shine the spotlight on Jesus.

State how Jesus filled or is filling your deep inner needs. In the before section, you express your needs and how you tried unsuccessfully to meet them. You now want to briefly show the difference that Jesus has made in your life.

What has happened since you received Christ? How has your life changed? When did you notice that change? How are you motivated differently now?

If there is a particular verse that applies, this would be a good place to use it.



### *If you received Christ at an early age...*

Perhaps you grew up in a Christian home and you received Christ at a very early age. If so, you can use a slightly different approach to writing your story. 1) **Before:** State the deep inner needs you see the people around you trying to fill. Describe how you see people unsuccessfully trying to satisfy those needs. 2) **How:** Explain how Jesus has helped you avoid some of the struggles many people face. Refer back to your conversion experience and state how you trusted Christ as a child. Make sure you briefly include truths about the gospel. 3) **After:** Illustrate how Christ has met or is meeting your deep inner needs. Remember not to communicate that all your struggles and problems have now ended. End your story by sharing how Jesus is still changing your life.