

## HOW TO SHARE YOUR OWN FAITH STORY

### What is a faith story or personal testimony?

There is one Gospel, but we can talk about it in two different ways:

Objective gospel: this is what God has done (knowledge)

Subjective gospel: this is what God has done **for me** (experience)

### Why share our faith story or give a testimony?

Most people find stories captivating. We remember the tales we were told as children, the fascination we had with stories that had good endings. Even now in our adult life, stories still fascinate us - whether from family, friends, celebrities, or soap operas. We love to get a glimpse of other people's lives and situations.

In a testimony, we get a glimpse of someone else's personal relationship with God. We get to see another facet of God through that person's eyes. One of the most refreshing things about it is that each person is unique and has their own story to tell.

A personal testimony is simply an excerpt from our own personal story of faith. Because it is our own experience, it cannot be argued with, although people are, obviously, free to believe or dismiss it. Any experience of God can

become material for a testimony: therefore, most people will have several testimonies which they can use depending on the circumstances.

**Testimonies are precious in God's eyes because they are a sign of faith; we are testifying to the presence or power of God in our lives – therefore testimonies speak for themselves and have power.**

The important thing is to know that **everybody** has a testimony.

**“Always have your answer ready for people who ask you the reason for the hope that you all have” 1Pet 3:15**

## **Types of testimony**

**1/ Personal conversion**, for example as with St Paul on the road to Damascus. In the lives of some people, God may act dramatically, making His presence felt more specifically, maybe at a moment of crisis or decision.

**2/ A deepening of one's relationship with God**, an 'episode' from our faith story. In some people's lives God works very gradually, drawing the person into an ever deeper relationship with Him. For example, the way we dealt with a difficulty, the peace we felt in a situation, the trust we placed in God when all seemed lost, the hope that never died, the strength we could not explain...

**3/ A community/ parish testimony.** A group of people share a communal story. Although unique to each, there

is a shared experience, a sense of 'being in it together'. For example a parish mission or a shared course like Alpha.

## Preparing a testimony

- Simplicity is the key
- Focus upon the event(s) or period of time and discern the change God brought about.

### Step 1: Sit in Prayer

It will be helpful to pray to the Lord that He may bring to mind those moments where He has been close in our lives.

Your story is a part of a bigger story. It's part of God's story. Believe it or not, your story **needs** to be shared with others. Before you even start thinking about who you will tell it to, or what it entails, take some time silently reflecting on how God has worked in and out of your life.

Whether change occurs dramatically or more gradually a typical testimony has three parts:

How I was.....

What happened...

How things are now.....

Here are some questions to help you sort your thoughts in that direction - **try to continue on from them as a way of discovering your own personal testimony. Pray for the Holy Spirit to enlighten and guide you.**

- 1 What's your earliest memory regarding God, religion or faith?
- 2 What were you told about church and God as you were growing up?
- 3 When did God first reveal Himself to you? What was going on in your life?
- 4 What was life like before you embraced your relationship with God?
- 5 What is your life like now that you know Him?
- 6 Why should others get to know God?

## Step 2: Write it Out

One of the reasons we don't share our story is because we don't know how to give it. Your story is personal and intimate, but if it is not fleshed out it becomes inexplicable. Your story **needs** to be shared: so here are some steps to help you construct your testimony.

**Introduction:** Tell everyone about yourself:

Who are you? A little relevant background. What makes you, you?

**Recognizing God:** This is where you talk about faith, religion and God.

Part 1: Looking back to some earlier time in your life, with hindsight was there some need in our life, something missing? For example, were you perhaps weak, confused, lost, empty, bereaved, resentful, fearful, lonely, feeling yourself to be unlovable? Or were there misconceptions and misunderstandings you had about your faith that caused problems, conflict or frustration in your life?

Part 2: When did your perception of God change? Was it gradual or sudden? Was it a moment, or more of a process? Did God help you by means of another person, a sacrament, a book, an event, a retreat, an occasion of prayer, words from the Bible...? How did this start to change the way you saw life and your relationship with Him?

**How Life Has Changed:** Now that God has worked through your life, relationship or situation, how have you grown? Why are you more at peace or how do you have more confidence in God? How do you now know the Lord - who has strengthened you, given you peace, resolved an impossible situation, forgiven you, called you to a particular responsibility?

The reason you are sharing your story is to show someone how God fills your life. It doesn't mean everything is perfect, it just means you see God and other things in your life more clearly.

**Many Samaritans of that town had believed in him on the strength of the woman's testimony... John 4:39**

### **Step 3: Practise sharing It**

Don't be shocked if the first time you read your story it sounds funny, odd or even confusing. Verbalising it is a big step and it needs practice. Try reading it to a trusted friend or family member who knows you and your story. They'll help you figure out what is missing and how you can add it in.

Once you've written something you are content with, start memorising it. When you memorise you take ownership and allow God to speak through you.

Sharing our faith can be daunting. Some of us may think we are too young/too old/too new in our faith/inexperienced/too timid, etc...

Jeremiah said to God, **"I do not know how to speak: I am a child"**. The Lord replied, **"Do not say, 'I am a child', for I will give you the words"**. (Jeremiah 1: 6 – 9)

And that's the beauty of it all – trusting that when God calls, He will anoint and equip you.

**Who knows? Your story might be the only gospel people hear, the only Jesus people meet...**