

Witness
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Acts 22:6-21

When the late Rich DeVos founder of Amway and the Orlando Magic would meet someone new he would say, *“Tell me about you.”* It’s a great way to get to know someone. He was really asking, *“What is your story?”* How would you answer that question if someone asked? What if they asked about your story as a Christ-follower?

Scripture tells us we are to be “witnesses” of how Jesus has changed our hearts and lives. (Acts 1:8). A witness simply tells what happened. The Apostle Peter told us to *“be ready to give a defense”* of our hope in Christ. I like how the NLT renders 1 Peter 3:15 & 16 : *“...if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. ¹⁶ But do this in a gentle and respectful way.”*

In Acts 22 we see the Apostle Paul sharing the story of his conversion on the road to Damascus. You might wonder, “Didn’t we cover that in August back in Acts 9?” We did. That was the author Luke’s account, this “testimony” is straight from Paul. In fact, he shared it again in Acts 26.

The Point: If someone asked you why you follow Christ and why it gives you hope, what would you say? Are you “ready” to tell your “Christ-story”? This morning we are going to talk about how to “prepare” to tell others about what Jesus has done for us. I’m even going to give you some “homework” to help with that. Back to this event in Acts 22.

Here’s the context: Paul had returned to Jerusalem but once again his teaching and preaching had riled up a group of Jews into a riotous mob determined to kill him for preaching Jesus as Savior and Messiah (V.21:30). The Roman army was in charge of maintaining order, so they whisked Paul out of the temple and away from the mob.

Just as they were about to take him into their headquarters Paul asked the Roman commander to allow him to give his own “defense” to the mob. Talk about a “tough room” to share your testimony in! First, Paul recited his resume as an educated Jew and his past as a “religious terrorist” who, just like the mob, had tried to stamp out Christianity. You might say he established what they had in common. Then he described his Damascus Road experience. Here is a Reader’s Digest condensed version:

As Saul approached Damascus, a bright light from heaven shone around him. He fell to the ground and heard Jesus’ voice asking why he was persecuting him. Blinded by the light, Saul was led to Damascus where a disciple named Ananias restored his sight and baptized him. Then some new information: Later in Jerusalem, while praying in the Temple, Saul had a vision of Jesus telling him to leave the city and go to the Gentiles. When Paul brought up reaching out to “Gentiles” the mob erupted again: *“Kill him!”*

Later in Acts 26, Paul would share his story in a slightly different way before King Agrippa. It's clear that Paul was "ready" to share his "Christ-story" in different settings.

- Question: Why should we "prepare" and even "practice" telling our faith story?
- Here are some "tips" to help you prepare to concisely tell your story.
- Reflect on key moments in your spiritual journey.
 - What was your life like before Christ?
 - What events caused you to realize your need for Jesus?
- Structure your story in three parts:
 - Before Christ: Describe life before faith, including any struggles.
 - Encounter with Christ: What caused you to turn to Jesus?
 - After Christ: What changes have occurred after trusting Christ? Be sure to include ongoing struggles and how God continues to work in your life.
- Keep It Concise:
 - Ideal length is around 300 words or three minutes long when spoken.
 - This keeps the listener's attention and allows for follow-up questions.
- Use Relatable Language:
 - Avoid overly religious jargon that may alienate listeners.
 - Instead, use language that is accessible and relatable.
- Practice the Delivery: It may feel weird but practicing with friends or family can help to calm you when you have the opportunity to share for real!
- Look for Opportunities: Sharing your story doesn't always have to be formal. You can weave parts of your testimony into everyday conversations when relevant topics arise.
- Jesus called us to be different but not obnoxious 😊. Peter's instruction above was to share our faith story "*in a gentle and respectful way.*"
- Emphasize God's love rather than judgment.
- Be patient allowing others to ask questions and take their time.
- Demonstrate your faith through kind actions.
- Respect Boundaries- If someone isn't interested, respect their wishes.
- Pray for Guidance -Seek wisdom on how to approach faith conversations.
- Remember: If your story doesn't include the gospel, it isn't a "Christ-story." Even if you cannot quote the verses in the "Romans Road" you can explain them:
 - I realized that I am a sinner because all people (even moral people) are born with sin in our hearts. We've all done things that disappoint God and fall short of His perfect standard (sin.)
 - God loves us and wants a relationship with us.
 - The problem: God is perfect and can't tolerate sin. The ultimate price for sin is death - not just physical death, but eternal separation from God.
 - God provided a solution. He loves us so much that He sent Jesus to earth to die in our place to pay the price for our sin. Then, Jesus rose from the grave so we can have life with Him forever after we die.
 - No one is "good enough" to earn God's gift of salvation, we receive it by putting our faith in Jesus as the Lord of our lives.
 - That means believing that Jesus died for our sins and rose again, and turning our lives over to Him as Lord (the Boss of my life.)

- We won't be perfect until we are with Him in eternity, but He does change our lives for the better in the meantime and gives us joy in our hearts.

So, What's the Takeaway? (Or in this case the homework!)

- Are you ready to tell your faith story?
- I'm handing out a great form from the organization Intervarsity that will help you develop your faith story in 30 minutes or less.
- Here are links to an article and the form:
<https://evangelism.intervarsity.org/resource/30-minutes-shareable-testimony> The form: <https://evangelism.intervarsity.org/resource/30-minutes-shareable-testimony>
- I would challenge all of us to spend a few minutes preparing to make our faith story "shareable." Then, practice it so we can be ready when the Holy Spirit provides a natural opening to share our story.
- My goal is to have more of you briefly share your story with the group on these "second Sundays" of a month. If you are intimidated about speaking in front of a group, we can make it an "interview-style" testimony to help you with that.
- One last IMPORTANT point: You can't share your faith story unless you've trusted Christ as Savior and Lord of your life. I literally just gave you the gospel message in plain language. I would be happy to help you to trust Jesus in faith so you can write a new, eternal happy ending to your story!

ⁱ Pat Williams. *How to Be Like Rich DeVos: Succeeding with Integrity in Business and Life* (Kindle Locations 935-938). Kindle Edition.

ⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#) (1 Pe 3:15–16). Tyndale House Publishers.

Citations for the tips to structuring your story:

[1] <https://prayerpassionpursuit.com/how-to-share-your-faith-in-jesus-with-others/>

[2] <https://evangelism.intervarsity.org/resource/30-minutes-shareable-testimony>

[3] <https://www.faithonview.com/my-testimony-hope-story-why-i-believe/>

[4] <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/live-it-post/share-your-faith-story-tips-for-creating-your-testimony/>

[5] <https://www.sweettothesoul.com/blog/2022/05/04/sharing-your-faith-story>

[6] <https://vinecc.org/sharing-your-faith-with-others/>

[7] <https://www.askaboutmyfaith.com/blogs/sharing-your-faith-story-matters>

[8] <https://missioncentral.church/2021/12/16/ive-always-known-jesus-how-do-i-share-my-testimony/>