

The Theology and Power of Personal Testimony

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[0 : 0 0] So if you could, if you can't, if you don't have a paper of your own, if you could share with somebody, I ran off 40 of them, so you might have to share with the person beside you or something.

I'm going to be talking through that paper, but also today, as it says at the top, we're going to be looking at the theology of power of personal testimony. We're going to do something a little bit different today than maybe you're used to during a learner's exchange.

At the end of this, my talk will be 25 to 30 minutes. I'm going to take some questions. I'm actually going to ask you to start writing a personal testimony and also to practice with the people beside you.

Does that sound scary? Don't worry about it. We're all friends here. So I think it doesn't really work that well to do something like this and not actually have the practical application of it.

This is actually theology applied, right? So what we're going to look at, we're going to look at the Bible, about some personal testimonies in the Bible and what we can learn from them. And then we're going to talk about how would you actually give your personal testimony and what are some of the things from a biblical point of view we should be doing and perhaps what we should not be doing.

[1 : 0 5] I'm going to pray for us and then we're going to start. Okay. Oh, the last thing is I've got to, today's Artizo Sunday at St. John's. Today and next week, which is a little special promotion for Artizo, these two Sundays.

And part of that is we interview someone at the front of the church. So I'm going to have to leave at about 10 to 10 to make sure that I'm there to interview the person. Okay. But you'll be writing your testimony curiously and talking to each other about it.

So it won't matter how much. The other thing I'm going to tell you is a week from tomorrow night, right here in the lower hall, in this building, we're going to have to meet the interns tonight. And I know many of you are supporters of Artizo.

Many of you go to the 730 service. Who here is a 730 service regular? So you get to see the Artizo interns all the time. And that's a special night for everyone to come along, meet them.

They'll talk a little bit about themselves and be able to mingle with them. And so everyone's invited to come along. It's at 730, a week from tomorrow night, right downstairs. And you can invite other people to come along, too. Maybe they're interested in being in the program or starting that program at their church.

[2 : 0 6] This is a good introductory kind of thing for that. Does that make sense? You know I'm going to do a promotion for Artizo if I come up here. You know that's going to happen, right? Friends, we are children of God.

We're very fortunate we can come together in peace this morning and in freedom. Let's come before God in prayer. Dear God, we thank you for your grace, for your mercy.

Lord, you act individually in each of our lives because you know us personally. We pray, Lord, that as we talk about our personal testimonies of knowing Christ, knowing our sin, and seeing salvation that Christ gives to us on the cross in his resurrection, that you will encourage us and that we'll see Christ more clearly.

Bless our time together this morning. And it's in your Son's name we pray. Amen. Okay, now I guess we're doing testimonies today. So a good way to start is for me to tell you a little bit about my background.

That would make sense. Now, later on in this, it says the testimony you give should only be about three minutes long. So we'll see if I can do that. Three or five.

[3 : 14] No, that's a thumbnail. So I was born in 1965 in Hamilton, Ontario. We're not going to do that. I grew up in a family that's not a Christian family.

But they're not antagonistic towards Christianity. They'd probably be an average Canadian family, middle class, Hamilton, Ontario. Come on, someone's waiting. Come on in. My family made me go to a church, a Uniting Church, until I was about 12.

And then they said, if you don't want to go to church anywhere, you don't have to. And I said, fine, because I really don't want it. So I stopped going to church. And the church I was in, I think at the time, probably every once in a while, the gospel was preached.

I know it probably wasn't every week, but I was spiritually blind to it or deaf to it. And I didn't hear it. I went through university, did engineering, and did a commerce engineering degree. And I pretty much lived the engineering lifestyle, which was not that great.

I went to Australia after that time on a working holiday visa to basically hang out, do what you do in Australia, and just enjoy myself.

[4 : 24] I was a complete hedonist. I had a couple of objectives in life at the time. One was to enjoy myself. The other was to become rich. That's one of the reasons why I did an engineering commerce degree. Now, because engineers don't make money, but commerce students do.

I knew that much. Now, when I got to Australia, I looked for accommodation in Sydney, Australia, and I went to the share accommodation section of the paper.

And there was a house that was looking for a... It had an open room. There were two other guys living there. It was the cheapest rent I could get. It was in a place called Randwick, which I had no idea where it was in Sydney, but it was actually rate by the university.

And I called the guys up and said, I didn't say anything about, are you a Christian or not? Because if they said they were Christians, I would have said, I'm not interested in living with you guys at all. Like, I don't want to live with Christians.

But I said, I asked them one thing. Are you guys using drugs? Because I'd lived with guys who were using drugs, and I just did not want to do that again. And so that's the only thing I asked them. And they said, no.

[5 : 28] I said, fine, I'll take the room. So I moved in. The first night I was there, I went to have a shower, and I looked on the walls of the shower, and one of the guys had taken hymns and put them in clear plastic sheets and had taped them to the walls of the shower.

And I'm like, take them to shower. I'm like, oh, God. I'm like, I'm living with Christians. Oh, no, this is horrible. I'm living with Christians.

It's going to be horrible. This is going to be so boring, and they're going to be on my case all the time and stuff. Those two guys became two of my best friends in the world. They were great guys.

I know now, when I look back, that a few things have been happening. My sister became a Christian when she was 14. She got married when she was 19. Her and her husband had been praying for me for years that I'd become a Christian.

I know that God was working through her prayers. I also know that God wanted to take me away from a lot of influences in Canada, which were just not good. And of all the places he would have taken me, it was Sydney, Australia, which is not that bad a place to go.

[6 : 34] But it's not where people become Christian, really, is it? Maybe Pasadena, California, or someplace like that. But not Sydney, Australia. I went to church with them. They said, come along to church.

And I was like, oh, okay. I want to meet Australia. They don't want to hang out with Canadians. I go to church with them. I went to church with them. The first night I was at church, a guy named Peter Jensen, who's now the Archbishop of Sydney, he went to preach.

And what he actually preached on was, can you be rich and can you be a Christian? And I was like, that's really relevant to me, isn't it? And I noticed that.

I remember another thing that I noticed is that everyone took a Bible and they opened it. And they actually were following the Bible. Now, up until that time, I thought the Bible was fairy tales. Like, I literally thought these were fictional fairy tales, like Grimm's fairy tales or something like that.

And all of a sudden, people opened it. And Peter Jensen made sense. Right? And I was like, well, maybe Christianity is relevant to my life. A guy named Paul, who's still a good friend of mine, disciplined me.

[7 : 38] An artizo guy at that time, a month after I'd been going to the church, cornered me in church one night and said, are you a Christian? Like, because that's what he'd been trained to do.

And that's what we're supposed to train our artizo guys to do. And I said, no, I'm not. He said, why don't you actually read a Bible book with the guy and see if you want to, you know, see what it's all about. So I read a book of Mark with Paul over a period of months.

And one night in my bedroom, I thought, is Jesus actually who he says he is? And I said, yeah, he is. And so I prayed and I became a Christian.

That was 22, 23 years ago for me. Like I said, it wasn't actually me. It was actually God that did that. And that's the way that God brought me to him. But that's what happened.

And after that time, all of a sudden, well, I wouldn't say my life changed dramatically, but it did change a lot if I look back over 23 years, of course. So originally I became an engineer and a commerce guy to get rich.

[8 : 40] And I'm not rich, so that's one way my life did change. But I'm in ministry and it's awesome. And I'm not an engineer anymore. I've actually got the privilege of actually working full-time in ministry.

All of a sudden, things which didn't make sense when I looked at the world started to make sense because I was, by the grace of God, reading his word, being in a Christian community, I was seeing the world more and more through the eyes of God than I used to.

I actually had no sense of my sinfulness before I became a Christian like some people do because I thought it was on the balance of things, it was actually pretty good. And I just realized I'm completely corrupt.

And it's Christ that saved me. And it completely changed. That completely changes how you look at the world. Not that I'm perfect now, but hopefully I'm much more gracious than I was when I was 22 years old because I really wasn't that nice a person, to tell you the truth.

So that's what happened to me. That's how I became a Christian. And in a moment, you're going to actually be able to talk to each other about what happened to you. First, we're going to look at the Old Testament and the New Testament and some different, I guess you'd call them testaments.

[9 : 43] So go to your piece of paper. Here we go. That was more than three minutes.

I heard that. That was three times five. Okay, Psalm 116. I don't know if you've ever realized, but the Psalms obviously are deeply personal.

A lot of them are spoken in the first person. And a lot of them are testimonies about how God has been working in the life of the Psalms. We're not going to be able to look at these passages in great detail. Obviously, we're going to look at Paul's great testimony, which you all are aware of, and it's worthwhile looking at.

But let's just take a quick look at the Psalms. So to save my voice, I'm going to ask someone if they could actually read this for us. Anyone want to read it? I will. Thank you. The whole thing?

Yeah, it'd be great. Is that okay? Yeah, I'm a teacher. I ask him to read all the time. Okay, thanks. Oh, you want me to stand up? I don't know. That's my question. And if anyone misbehaves, you've got to...

[10 : 53] I'd watch... Where's Bill? I'd watch that Bill wherever he is. In here. Yeah. Watch him. I love the Lord because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy.

Because he inclines his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live. The snares of death encompassed me. The pangs of Sheol laid hold on me.

I suffered distress and anguish. Then I called on the name of the Lord. Oh, Lord, I pray, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord and righteous. Our God is merciful.

The Lord preserves the simple. When I was brought low, he saved me. Return, O my soul, to your rest. For the Lord has dealt bountifully with you.

For you have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I believed even when I spoke.

[11 : 51] I am greatly afflicted. I said in my alarm, all mankind are liars. What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits to me? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.

I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. O Lord, I am your servant.

I am your servant, the son of your maidservant. You have loosed my bond. I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all his people, in the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst, O Jerusalem.

Praise the Lord. Thanks a lot. Okay, so this is a magnificent song. Magnificent song. What do we see as we go through this? And it's going to be very, very brief. I realize that.

And then we're going to, first of all, we see him. Now, something has happened to the psalmist. Something, these, the snares of death encompass me, the pangs of shield, they hold him. I suffer distress and anguish.

[12 : 55] Was it someone, was it depression? Was it calamity in his family? Was it someone pursuing him? We don't know. But he talks about what happened to him before.

And then we go to this great part from verse 5 to 7 where he talks about the character of God. Right? This is a character of God. This is a God I have come to know. So, he talks about what actually happens to him.

How God's character has actually come to him. And how God has actually worked in his life. And then finally in verse 12 to 14, he talks about what that will do in his life.

What shall I render to the Lord for all his marriages? I will lift up the cup of salvation and call him on the name of the Lord. That's his response to knowing God. And then in the end, we get once again, praise the Lord. It starts and ends with praising God.

Right? I love the Lord because he has heard my voice and my pleas for mercy. And finally, in the courts of the house of the Lord, in your midst of Jerusalem, praise the Lord. Right? That's his personal testimony to how God has been working in his life.

[13 : 55] It's magnificent, isn't it? Now, let's keep going. I don't know if you would consider this a testimony. But John 9.25, Jesus is healed of blind men.

What does he say? It's at the top of page 2. He replied, this is talking to people about Jesus, whether he's a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know, I was blind, but now I see. That in a way is a testimony, isn't it?

He's met Jesus Christ. He's trying to figure out, but what he does know is, God has actually worked in his life, and this supernatural event has occurred. John 4.28, this is a Samaritan woman.

Do you remember the Samaritan woman at the well? How many husbands has she had? Do you remember? Four and one. Yeah. And Jesus knows that, right?

And she kind of lies and tries to hide from her. But he knows all about that. And she's confronted by God that knows her personally, yet still forgives her. Right? She tastes the grace of God.

[14 : 53] And what does she say when she goes to town? So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, Come to see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ? And what's the response? They went out of the town and were coming to him.

So she's actually put two negations. She's a Samaritan. She knows that the Jews are waiting. Well, the Samaritans are waiting for the Messiah. And she's like, this guy knew all this. He says he's forgiven her.

And he says it's the Messiah. Okay. Now, most of you are familiar with the next one, which is Acts 26. But this is just great. I think there's humor in here.

Because at the end, Agrippa goes, you're about to die. And you're trying to convert. And Paul's like, that's absolutely right. That's what I'm doing. This is what has happened to me. Which is just fantastic. So once again, would somebody like to read that?

We can split this into two readings. How about 1 to 11? So would somebody like to read that for us? Thank you. And then 12. Oh, 12. Do you want to take the second part, mate?

[15 : 50] 12 to the end? Okay. Nice and loud. Thanks, man. So you do 1 through 11. 1 through 11. And you can do 12 to the end. Yeah. So Agrippa said to Paul, you have permission to speak for yourself.

And Paul stretched out his hand and made his defense. I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I'm going to make my defense today against all the accusations of the Jews, especially because you are familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews.

Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently. My manner of life from my youth, spent from the beginning among my own nation and in Jerusalem, is known by all the Jews.

They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that according to the strictest party of our religion, I have lived as a Pharisee. And now I stand here on trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our fathers, to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship night and day.

And for this hope I am accused by Jews, O King. Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead? I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth, and I did so in Jerusalem.

[17 : 05] I not only locked up many of the saints in prison after receiving authority from the chief priests, but when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them, and I punished them often in all the synagogues, and tried to make them blaspheme.

And in raging fury against them, I persecuted them, even to foreign cities. In this connection, I journeyed to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests.

At midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, that shone around me and those who journeyed with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?

It is hard for you to kick against the goats. And I said, Who are you, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me, and to those in which I will appear to you, delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.

Therefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem, and throughout all the regions of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.

[19 : 00] For this reason, the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. To this day, I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass, that the Christ must suffer, and that by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.

And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, you are out of your mind. Your great learning is driving you out of your mind.

But Paul said, I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking true and rational words. For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly.

For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this is not being done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets?

I know that you believe. And Agrippa said to Paul, In a short time, would you persuade me to be a Christian? And Paul said, Whether a short or long, I would to God that only you, but I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am, except for these chains.

[20 : 28] Great, isn't it? Okay, now, as we look at Paul before Agrippa, once again, just as we move to the top, what are some of the things that we see? Paul, obviously, he moves from, this is what I was, right?

And he was horrible. And again and again and again, when Paul gives his testimony in different parts of the New Testament, that's his starting point. I was not only sinful, I was a professional Christian killer.

That's what he was. He was sent by the Jewish people to destroy the Christian church. He was the professional. He was the guy that was going to do it, right? So that's why he says, if you are sinful, I am worse.

And then he talks about what happens to him, right? On the Damascus road. That starts in verse 12, and then he talks later about how that's affected him. And to him, he's got a pretty good story after, right?

Because what happened to him after? He became the apostle to the Gentiles. That's a pretty magnificent story, isn't it? From a professional Christian killer to the apostle to the majority of the known world.

[21 : 37] Now, here's a question for you. I want you to talk. I'm going to make you guys work today. Is that okay? You don't have a choice, anyways. No, I'm going to make you work. I want you to talk to the person beside you about Paul, how Paul presents himself in his testimony, right?

And how he presents God. That's your question. How does Paul present himself? And how does Paul present God? Just in that Acts thing of this other. Do you understand what we're doing? Yeah. Okay.

I'm going to give you a couple minutes to talk about that. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

[23 : 36] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

You know that... Okay. Don't worry, you get a chance to work together in a few moments again.

Okay, so who can tell me? How does Paul present himself? He's before King Gribba. He's saying, I'm going to tell you why I'm here. Here's my defense. He's not going to say I'm innocent.

[25 : 19] He's going to say, let's start at the beginning. This is what's happened to me. How does Paul present himself? How does he present himself before Gribba? Any ideas? Sinful. Absolutely.

Sinful, right? Sinful. How does he present God? Gracious. Gracious? Absolutely. Absolutely. I've got now, Paul is sinner, God is Savior.

That's how he presents it, right? Now, that's really important because we're going to talk a little bit about some of the commonalities between all these different things. But that's a really important thing, right? Paul is sinful.

God is a Savior. You've got no doubt. And if you listen to all his testimonies, it's the same thing again. And we're thinking, you know, Paul, you're actually pretty good. You know, you're pretty good and you did a lot of stuff. And you were a God-appointed apostle.

But his starting point for his relationship with God was, I am sinful. God is gracious. I know even more than all of you because I was horrible. Now, look over your page.

[26 : 16] You might have been on page three already. I was on the report. Sorry. So page three. Go back to page. Some key observations. As we look at these different examples in the Bible. And I know that the two earlier New Testimonies are just brief.

But remember, there's other ones in the New Testament. I'm sure some come to mind. First of all, they're God-centered. They're not person-centered. They're God-centered. They're not person-centered. And I'm going to tell you, I've heard a lot of personal testimonies which are pretty person-centered.

In fact, I heard one testimony about a journey in a Christian life that didn't mention Jesus or God once. Now, I think that's because the person hadn't really reflected on what had happened to them.

We're going to get to that in a moment. But this is what God's doing in the world today. He's actually revealing Christ to creation. And our testimony, when we preach the Bible, when we sing in church, when we witness in the world, we're revealing Christ to humanity.

And so you need to keep that in mind when you're actually giving a testimony. You're actually revealing Christ to the person that you're talking to. You're not revealing yourself. You're not revealing yourself. However, God does work through us, so it's not inconsequential of talking about our own story.

[27 : 28] Here's the second one. It reveals the character of God. The psalm was clear in that, wasn't it? So much of the psalm was the character of God. It witnesses to God by glorifying God. So you reveal the character of God and what God has done in your life.

That is a witness of the character. That will glorify God. How can it not glorify God? Or Christ. Or Christ. Number three. It talks about what God has done in their lives and how he has changed their lives.

That's obvious, isn't it? That's what they're talking about. Four. It has some commonalities as well as a personally unique aspect. Right? So God works in each of our lives individually.

Right? So there will be some aspects to your testimony which are unique to you. Anyone else here became a Christian in a household in Sydney with two guys that you moved in with that you didn't know they were Christians?

Anyone else? It's a bit really weird as you put your hand on it. But that's a commonality. I mean, and that will create a connection to some people but not to other people. Right? But there's some commonalities.

[28 : 25] My life was changed. I accepted I was sinful. The grace of Christ came to me. Sometimes a commonality is it was through a Christian community. We came to Christ. Many of us will have stories like that. Many of us will have a story that God worked through an individual to bring Christ to us.

For me, it was also being brought to God's word. To see Christ in God's word. That might be a commonality. But then there's an individual character to it too. Number five.

For the New Testament passage, the testimony was a starting point to knowing Christ. So the woman goes and says, This guy knew everything that I did.

Is he the Messiah? And what are we told? Everyone's like, let's go find out if he's the Messiah. So they're going to find out for themselves. And a testimony is supernaturally powerful.

But it's usually a starting point for someone to find out more about Jesus. And we actually see that. With King Agrippa, this is his one chance. And he's, I'm here to convert you, King Agrippa. This is not going to be the whole story of your Christian life.

[29 : 31] But this is what's happening. And I want you to know. It's a starting point. Part of us understanding all those aspects is to understand what God is doing today on the earth. And I've already talked a little bit about this.

Number one. So what God is doing today. God is not only speaking to us by his word in the spirit to reveal Christ. He works and acts in human history. Now Dr. Packer talked about this. I know I'm on solid ground here because I think this is what Dr. Packer said during Ryan Cook's talk about being a theologian.

So God is a God that not only would pick up the Bible and what he says in the Bible is true. But that goes hand in hand to how he has worked in the history of his people. So there was a person named Jesus Christ who lived and walked on this earth 2,000 years ago and was crucified.

And testified that he actually rose from the dead and ascended. That is a fact, right? That's not just some type of philosophical proposition. It's a fact.

The Jewish people, when they want to go back to their identity in God, one of their starting points is always to go back to the Exodus. And God says, before he gives them any type of legislation in the Old Testament, like the Ten Commandments, the starting point is to say to them, I am the God who brought you out of slavery into the land of freedom.

[30 : 50] I'm not just a God who speaks. I'm a God who works and acts in the world. And God is acting and working in the world. And he acts and works in our own lives. Okay. How God, to point two, how God has worked in each of your personal lives will include, take the hat out, will include some important commonalities as well as some personally unique aspects.

We talked a little bit about that, right? And that can be quite powerful. God's given us a background and a history, right? And that's part of what God's given us.

And that can be because he wants us to connect to other people from the same background and history. That doesn't mean that your testimony is only going to be powerful for that group of people, but it can be uniquely powerful for that group of people sometimes.

Right? Number three. In this time and this place, God's chosen means, especially revealing himself to us, is by his word. So we go to scripture to better appreciate and understand all of our personal Christian experience.

That's a really important thing. So you understand. So you can look at any experience we have as a Christian, and we try to understand and make sense of it. And we can be misled. So what do we do?

[31 : 57] We look at God's word, the Bible, to try to understand what has actually happened. So to actually understand and reveal Christ faithfully through your testimony, you're going to have to understand with biblical eyes what has actually happened.

Does that make sense? Now I think that was the issue when I hear testimonies which are just kind of about me. Because I think there's a lack of maturity in Christ to understand actually what I'm saying about you is actually what God was doing.

It's actually glorifying God. It's not glorifying you. And so you need to actually go to the word of God and think, was it me that actually decided I'm going to go to this church and I went to the Bible study and I made this awesome discovery?

Or was it the fact that people were praying for you, God put you in that place in that time. And by the grace of God, he gave you the Holy Spirit to show you the truth about Christ. Because that's what the Bible says happened. So that's why we actually, whatever, if you actually understand, you want to actually, in your testimony, you want to reveal Christ truthfully and faithfully, you better, you need to understand what's happened through Bible eyes.

Okay? So, and that's my last point. So to faithfully reveal Christ to your hearers, your testimony needs to be shaped by God's truth as given to us in Scripture. That's what we want to do in our testimony.

[33 : 13] We don't want to reveal ourselves to people. That's going to be part of what you're going to do. We're not going to reveal our, you know, whatever's happened in our past, as as magnificent and fantastic. You want to show people Christ. That's what we're supposed to be doing.

Okay. Some dangers of personal testimony versus evangelism today. First one I've talked about quite a bit. Could not glorify Christ at all. It's all about me versus it's all about God.

I've seen that a lot. Yeah. And, and unfortunately, the, the end point of that can kind of be someone thinking, first of all, there's no idea of repentance or sin or anything like that, and kind of thinking, wow, this is just like, this is obviously just a lifestyle choice for you, which is awesome, but I choose not to make that choice.

Without the understanding that there is a sovereign God who has died for you and is calling you to him, and all those other things we understand from the Bible. Okay. Okay. Number two. Could reinforce a postmodern belief that there is no absolute truth, only personal experience.

Right? Now, this is one of the dangers, I think, of a testimony. Is it's, well, that's true for you, but it's not true for me, which the postmodern world loves.

[34 : 26] Right? So there's no absolute truth. There is an absolute truth within science and mathematics and stuff, but within things outside those, those fields, which are, which are more empirical, there is no absolute truth.

Christianity can fall within that category. And therefore, one of the dangers of, you know, someone, of your testimony, is people can say, well, that's, that's awesome. That's the truth that you created, and that's fantastic.

I'm glad you're happy and stuff. So it's a starting point, right? It's a starting point. Now, that doesn't mean that your testimony is not valid and powerful. But just be aware that that could be the reaction to people.

And it's, I, how do you actually go from there to actually, well, you say, well, why didn't you come and read God's word with me? Or, yeah, that's true, but this same God, this same God is sovereign over all things, including you.

It's not just, I don't have a personal God. This is the same God for everybody. Right? Just be aware that could be, you know, that's, I think, some of the reasons why that's, people are like, let's give a personal testimony.

[35 : 25] And people are receptive to it because it, it, it kind of says, it's true for me, it doesn't have to be true for you. Here's the next one. You give a secondary place to the power of the word of God, standing independently from any individual human experience.

So the word of God is supernaturally powerful for the work of the Holy Spirit to change people's lives. And that is the, one of the number one issues within churches today.

And I've seen it in every ministry I've been in, and certainly on campus ministry. People have lost faith in the supernatural power of the word of God to change people's lives. And it will. And I've seen it change people's lives, and God says it will.

And one of the dangers is that we never get people to the point where they're going to read God's word for themselves. Because they've got the testimony, and they've got another testimony, and they've got another testimony, and then they start to create Christianity for themselves.

So it's a starting point. It's a starting point. Okay. Now, we've already, almost run out of time. Let me give you some practical guidelines. First of all, the talk in your pocket.

[36 : 30] What's that about? Well, it's good to always have a reason to give to people for your belief. And that's actually from the Bible, right?

Always be ready, always be prepared to give a reason for what you believe. Are you ready? Are you ready to give a reason for what you believe? We were taught, you know, we were taught in college and also in the church as in Australia, you always got to have something you're going to say to someone when they, you know, when they give you that question which you're completely unexpected in the 30 seconds where you're in the elevator with them going from one floor to another.

So, you're a Christian. What do you believe? And my response is, uh, I, what? Uh, uh, what? You know what? Um, a testimony can actually be a really good thing to do.

Well, this is how I became a Christian. Right? And, and this is what it meant to me. This is what it was like before. This was meant to me. This is what it's doing now. And I'd love to talk to you about it more. Why don't we meet? Um, that, if you don't have anything in your back pocket, put your testimony in your back pocket.

Right? And be ready to, to talk to someone about it. Now, big question. What if you, what if you've always been a Christian? Right? What if you've always been a Christian? You're like, well, I don't really have much of a testimony.

[37 : 42] Yeah, you do. You got a testimony. Of course you do. Uh, and your experience is valid because God is working in your life always. Right? So, you don't have to make something up. Uh, I, you know, I didn't really, I became a Christian when I was 12.

Well, you really didn't. No. Like, don't make something up. Um, God is always working in your life. We are always learning about God. And you're, you are a Christian in a non-Christian world. Right?

Right? And so, how has God affected you in those ways? Um, so you don't have to have the fantastic, I became a Christian when I was about to parachute out of a plane.

Somebody said, what if you die or something? A story like that. You don't have to have that. Um, God's made you the way you are. And if you've grown up in a Christian family, that is awesome. I wish I, I wish I did, but I didn't.

Um, and that's fantastic. And you talk about that and what the difference God has made in your life today. Because you're living in a non-Christian world. Right? Um, and those are all parts of how God is working in you.

[38 : 40] Okay. Um, the next part is a very, very simple, here's how you write a testimony. Uh, and there's lots of different ways to do this. I'll just give you a very, very simple one. So, you talk about what happened to you before.

What were you like before? Or, obviously, if you've grown up as a Christian, you might talk about, this is what it was like when I was a kid. And then I grew up and, and, and, and this is how I was formed as a Christian. And this is how it affects me today.

And, you know, so it's going to be slightly different. Um, how, how you were converted? Or perhaps how God has been working with you, working on you today? And maybe, and since.

You know, looking back. We saw this in Paul's testimony. Looking back. And there's, there's points under each one of these, right? A little bit more detail and stuff. Um, that's a very, very simple outline. I'm going to ask you to go through this in a moment.

And start to write your testimony and talk to the person beside you about it. I'm just going to, in the short time we got left. Important tips to remember. Page five. Sticks to the point.

[39 : 36] What God has done in your conversion and new life in Christ should be the main points, right? We talked about this. Uh, it can be specific. Um, you know, what, what was happening? What time?

What, who was involved with you? Uh, all those different things which make your testimony real. Um, be current. Tell us that in your life today. Be honest. Don't exaggerate or dramatize your life for a fact.

I mean, you can come up with some great stories. Can you? Completely untrue. But amazing stories. Um, don't do that, okay? Don't do that. I was parachuting and someone said, what if you died? What will you do?

Make your decision now. Great story. It never happened. Um, make it personal. Don't preach. Tell what Christ has done for you. Right? And also, one thing, you can use the word of God.

If you, if your heart has been so changed by, by, by God. God's word. You can memorize the verses and say, you know what? This is a really important verse to me. Uh, this is what it means to me. Right? This is how it's affected my life.

[40 : 32] This is how I see God working. This is how we, God said this would happen. Here's his word. Here's how it's affected my life. Here's how I see it happening in my life. And the last part is things to avoid. It's just a lot of, like, don't use, you know, those Christian, those churchy terms.

Right? Don't use the churchy terms. Um, just the communication thing when you're talking to people who don't know about Jesus. Okay? Um, so, probably, you know, the starting point for your testimony would be, well, our God is a triune God.

It would probably not be a good starting point for some of you. Um, the theology of the Trinity. Something like that. Uh, you gotta speak in the language people understand. Okay. Okay. That's very, very basic.

Uh, I'm gonna have to run, unfortunately, but I've got a few minutes for questions, if there are questions. If you don't ask questions, you're gonna have to start to work on this to realize that.

I'll just say that. Okay? Okay. Oh, did you have?

[41 : 34] I was just gonna say, I think this is amazingly helpful. And thank you for doing it. Because, um, I, I have had people in the coffee hour say, are you a believer?

And I sort of think, what, what do they think I'm doing here, anyway? That they ask me this kind of question. But, there obviously is a need to be able to explain to other Christians as well, I guess.

And, um, I don't mean to justify a position, but have you got any suggestions about how to deal with a person who is trying to nail you? With this question. Which is, friend, are you saved?

In a different cloak. You know? Um, do you mean they're saying that satirically? Like, sarcastically to you? No, I don't think so. Right. I think they, they know there are people in the church that maybe are kind of wobbly about that.

Yeah. But, I mean, thinking back to when this happened to me, I would have said that was the reason. Or they may have wanted to decide whether I was a Christian or not.

[42 : 38] It could have been that. Yeah. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know about the specific circumstances of the question. Um. I don't, uh. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Like, I don't, somebody, someone's like, are you a Christian?

Yeah. Yeah? Yeah? Yeah. Mm-hmm. Do you confess the Lord with your mouth and believe that you're saved by him? Yeah. Yeah. So, I mean, I guess I'm coming, in Australia, if someone says they're a Christian, they're a Christian because there's no, nothing to be gained by saying you're a Christian if you're not in Australia.

No. So, maybe in Canada there is. I mean, I don't, that's kind of an odd question, isn't it? Well, this happened to me. Yeah. Not throughout the hour. Yeah. Not recently, but, you know. Yeah. Yeah. So, I kind of wondered why it would, and was there a way I could easily answer that, but I think you've given it to me.

Yeah. I mean, also, with, you know, any type of question, there's always, a lot of times there's a question behind that question. Yeah. And I don't know, there could be a question behind that question, which is kind of such a weird question in a way, isn't it? I don't know.

Yeah, any other? Don't be rude. Okay. I have to make sure that Eric leaves the government service. Send some off to him. Okay, thanks, guys.

[43 : 47] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.