

The following guidelines from The Navigator's *The 2:7 Series* will be very helpful as you start preparing your personal testimony. Feel free to contact Pastor Tom Joyce with any specific questions you may have (703-941-4124).

### *Why Prepare a Personal Testimony?*

The Apostle Peter challenges us: "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15).

One of the most effective tools you have for sharing your faith is the story of how Jesus Christ gave you eternal life and how He has enriched your life. The Apostle John wrote, "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard" (1 John 1:3). John was testifying about his relationship to Jesus Christ.

When the Apostle Paul stood before King Agrippa (Acts 26), he spoke simply, logically, and clearly about his life *before* salvation, *how* he met Christ, and what his life was like *after* conversion. Paul's testimony takes three or four minutes to read aloud in a conversational manner.

Although you will be writing your testimony, the purpose is not to memorize it and give it verbatim. The purpose is to help you put into words some of the important and interesting details of your conversion. The choice of the right words, the flow of your story, and knowing how to begin and how to end are all important.

As you begin this project, ask the Lord for wisdom and insight into just how to share your story. Be open to suggestions from your instructor.

Many graduates of *The 2:7 Series* have said that the work on the testimony was one of the most beneficial parts of their discipleship training. Many have come to Christ simply because people like you have sharpened their testimony while in *The 2:7 Series*. It is one way to "be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."

Trust God and work hard. Give time, thought, and prayer to this important part of your training in discipleship.

### *Preparing a Personal Testimony: General Comments*

You will be able to complete all or almost all of your testimony work by the end of the special three-to-four-hour workshop during Session 8. Some time will be given in Session 9 for sharing completed testimonies and finishing up the few testimonies not completed during Session 8.

## 1. PRIMARY AIM

The primary aim is for you to complete and present your personal salvation testimony from an outline on a 3x5 card.

## 2. NUMBER OF DRAFTS

The amount of time and effort it will take each person to prepare a personal testimony may vary greatly. This has little to do with intelligence or spirituality. It has everything to do with the complexity of your story. Some testimonies are extremely difficult to communicate clearly. Some have to be condensed. Others need to be expanded. So, there are many factors which influence how long it will take you to complete your written personal testimony.

## 3. DIFFICULT BUT REWARDING

Some students find this work on the personal testimony the most difficult part of the course, and sometimes the most discouraging. On the other hand, many students find it to be the most profitable and stimulating part of the course. Your attitude and how aggressively you do your work can make all the difference. Work hard! Pray for God's wisdom and guidance.

## 4. SALVATION TESTIMONY

Testimonies can be prepared on many subjects and tailored to various audiences. The testimony you will prepare during this course . . .

- will be designed to give to a non-Christian.
- will be best suited for sharing one-on-one or in a small group.
- will primarily serve as a "door opener," not a "convincing tool"

Many people are not ready to be convinced that they need Christ, but can often be led to talk about the gospel after an inoffensive presentation of a personal testimony.

## *Effective Personal Testimony Preparation*

### OUTLINE FOR A PERSONAL TESTIMONY

Paul's testimony in Acts 26 is a biblical model you can follow in writing your own personal testimony. Paul's format in Acts 26 is:

Lead-in	Verses 2-3
BEFORE	Verses 4-11
HOW	Verses 12-20
AFTER	Verses 21-23
Close	Verses 24-29

During Sessions 7 and 8 you will prepare only a *before*, *how* and *after*. The *lead-in* and *close* that you use will vary with each person and situation. The *lead-in* and *close* will be discussed in Session 9.

## GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING THE MORE SPECIFIC CONTENT

1. *Make it sound conversational.* Avoid literary sounding statements. Use informal language.
2. *Share, don't preach. Say "I" and "me," not "you."* This helps keep the testimony warm and personal.
3. *Avoid religious words, phrases, and jargon.*

<u>RELIGIOUS WORDS</u>	<u>POSSIBLE SUBSTITUTES</u>
Believe/Accepted Christ	Trusted or relied on Christ for my salvation
Sin	Disobedience, breaking God's laws, turned my back on God
Went forward	Decided to turn my life over to God
Under the blood	God forgave the wrongs I had done
Saved/Born Again	Became a real Christian
Christian	Committed Christian, real Christian

4. *Generalize so more people can identify with your story.* Don't name specific churches, denominations, or groups. Avoid using dates and ages.
5. *Include some humor and human interest.* When a person smiles or laughs, it reduces tension. Humor is disarming and increases attention.
6. *One or two word pictures increase interest.* Don't just say, "Bill shared the gospel with me." You might briefly describe the setting so a person listening can visualize it.
7. Explain how Christ met or is meeting your deep inner needs, but *do not communicate that all your struggles and problems ended at conversion.*
8. *Sound adult, not juvenile.* Reflect an adult point of view even if you were converted at an early age.
9. *Avoid dogmatic and mystical statements which skeptics can question,* such as, "I prayed and God gave me a job," or "God said to me."
10. *Simplify-reduce "clutter."* Mention a limited number of people and use only their first or last names. Combine information when you can.
  - a. Poor: "Martha Smith, Nancy Van Buren, and her cousin Jane Matthews came by my office at Digital Binary Components Corporation . . ."
  - b. Good: "Martha and two other friends talked with me at work one day . . ."
  - c. Good: "After living in five states and attending six universities, I finally graduated and got an engineering job."

## DEVELOPING THE *BEFORE*, *HOW*, AND *AFTER* SECTIONS

Here are practical suggestions for developing the *before*, *how*, and *after* sections in your personal testimony.

1. Before:

a. 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 Christ? Some examples of inner needs are:

- |                     |                          |                       |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| -lack of peace      | -desire to be in control | -lack of significance |
| -fear of death      | -loneliness              | -no real friends      |
| -something missing  | -lack of security        | -no motivation        |
| -no meaning to life | -lack of purpose         |                       |

b. Non-Christians are usually trying to satisfy their deep inner needs through unsatisfactory solutions. In the past, what unsatisfactory solutions did you use to attempt to meet those deep inner needs? As you develop your testimony list positive as well as negative solutions you may have tried. Some examples are:

- |                  |                 |                       |
|------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| -marriage/family | -sports/fitness | hobbies/entertainment |
| -work            | -money          | - sex                 |
| -drugs/alcohol   | -education      | - wrong friends       |

2. How:

a. Describe the circumstances that caused you to consider Christ as the solution to your deep inner needs. Identify the events that led to your conversion. In some cases this may have taken place over a period of time.

b. State specifically the steps you took to become a Christian. If there is a particular passage of Scripture that applies here, you may want to use it. Usually you will simply paraphrase it.

c. Include the gospel clearly and briefly. The gospel includes:

- 1) All have sinned.
- 2) Sin's penalty.
- 3) Christ paid the penalty.
- 4) Must receive Christ.

3. After:

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

b. Conclude with a statement like: "But the greatest benefit is that I know for certain that I have eternal life" The person you talk to will tend to comment on the last thing you say. Often it is natural to move from the testimony into a clear presentation of the gospel.

## Choose Your Testimony Format-Samples Worksheets

Read the three sample testimonies (pages 56-58). Then, come back and check the box beside the format which best fits your own story. As you write the first draft of your testimony, refer back to the sample testimony most like your own.

**FORMAT 1. ADULT CONVERSION**

You trusted Christ as an adult. You have a distinct *before, how* and *after*.

**FORMAT 2. EARLY CONVERSION/ADULT FULL COMMITMENT**

You need to evaluate whether the early conversion experience was genuine. If you conclude it was not genuine, then use Format 1 as your model. If it was genuine, your life has been characterized by spiritual immaturity, or a life-style similar to that of a non-Christian.

**FORMAT 3. EARLY CONVERSION/CONSISTENT GROWTH**

You probably grew up with Christian parents and have a strong church background. You may have very little *before*.

### SAMPLE TESTIMONY FORMAT 1. ADULT CONVERSION

#### BEFORE

A few years ago I found myself lacking purpose in my life. Something was missing. Nothing seemed to fill the void. I had majored in Electrical Engineering in college and got a great job when I graduated. I kept striving for one promotion after another, thinking that the next promotion would be the one that would satisfy me. But it never did. I began working longer and longer hours giving myself to my profession. This began to have a negative effect on my family. I kept telling my wife I was only doing it for her and the kids, but I knew otherwise. What started out as the "ideal" marriage was coming apart at the seams. It got to the point that I did not want to go home at night. "Happy hour" was more fun than arguments.

#### HOW

In my next job I was asked to attend an engineering seminar - with David and Jack from work. David seemed to have a certain something that was missing in my life. On the way home from the seminar David told me about how Christ had changed his life and had given him a whole new reason for living. Many of the things he said seemed to be directed right at me. He talked about having been successful in business but that he was always falling short of his goals and expectations. Then he said that the answer to his frustration was to have personally committed his life to Jesus Christ. He had admitted to God that he was living in disobedience and had turned control of his life over to God. He mentioned the Bible said that Christ had died on the cross so we could be forgiven for everything we had ever done wrong. I had heard this before, but now it seemed to make a lot more sense. A couple of days after I returned home I took a walk down by the lake near our house. I prayed and confessed to God

some of the things I had done that I knew had hurt and displeased Him. I asked Christ to come into my life and take over, because I wasn't doing a very good job with it by myself.

## AFTER

Well, there was no flash of light or earthquake, but I do know that I felt as if a large weight was lifted from my shoulders. Not everything is perfect now, but I do feel as if I have a whole new purpose for living. God has given me a whole new set of priorities to live by. But the greatest thing of all is that I know for certain that I have the gift of eternal life.

## SAMPLE TESTIMONY FORMAT 2. EARLY CONVERSION/ ADULT DEEPER COMMITMENT

### BEFORE FULL COMMITMENT

Not too long ago you could have characterized my life as lacking any real inner peace. Everything around me seemed to be in utter turmoil. Nothing I did would ease the tension in my life.

It didn't seem as if anything could fill the longing that was growing in my heart. I thought I could fill that void by getting involved in activities. I joined the health spa, took tennis lessons, was involved in transporting our children to all their various activities. I considered going back to work part-time. Then my husband received a promotion and we were transferred to another city. If I had felt the pressure before, the move just added to the intensity. It seemed that the only relief I could gain was by taking tranquilizers, but that was only temporary and it scared me to realize that I was beginning to depend upon them for relief.

### HOW

We had gotten out of the habit of attending church over the years, but the Johnsons invited us to go to church with them, so we started going. After we had attended for a couple of months, we decided to participate in a Bible study discussion group. There we met people who were fun but took their Christianity seriously. They began to challenge us to really commit our lives to Christ.

We reviewed some things I had heard while growing up: that we were all breaking God's laws and deserved to be separated from Him, but that God had provided the way to restore that relationship with Him. That provision was the death of His only Son, Jesus Christ. What I needed to do about it was acknowledge my disobedience to God and turn from it and ask Christ to come into my life as my Savior and Lord. So I asked Christ to take over my life.

### AFTER

It wasn't until we got involved in that mid-week Bible study that I really understood what it meant to be committed to Jesus Christ. It was there that I learned that I could not gain inner peace in my life if I was going to try to run my own life. As a result of the Bible study I made a whole new commitment to Christ. The inner peace that I was striving for so

desperately was finally there. But the greatest thing of all is that I know for certain that I have a personal relationship with God and have eternal life.

SAMPLE TESTIMONY  
FORMAT 3: EARLY CONVERSION/  
CONSISTENT GROWTH

**BEFORE**

As I look around me I see people feverishly trying to fill voids in their lives. Men are giving themselves to their jobs, and in the process sacrificing their families. A number of my fellow workers seem to be trying to find meaning in their lives, but just when they think they have attained what they want, they realize these things are not meeting their deepest needs. I find myself being involved in many of these same activities, but I am finding satisfaction. What is the difference?

**HOW**

I realize that I'm not reacting to life the way many people do for a good reason. I have something in my life that has given me peace and purpose that many others do not have. I have discovered that a personal relationship with Jesus Christ fills the voids that many people are trying to fill with activities and things that just don't satisfy. As I was growing up, my parents were very active in church. Because they were active, they figured that I should be also. So every Sunday, there we were. What was real to them was just a game to me. Then one summer I attended a church summer camp. This changed my whole view of "religion" I discovered at this camp that Christianity was more than a religion, it was a personal relationship with God through His Son, Jesus Christ. In the evenings our discussions centered around who Jesus Christ was and what He did. They were interesting to me. One day after we had finished sports my counselor asked me if I had ever personally committed my life to Jesus Christ or was I still thinking about it? I told him I was still thinking about it. We sat down and talked. He explained from the Bible what I would need to do in order to become a real Christian. I saw that I had done many things wrong and that the penalty was eternal death! I saw that Christ had died on the cross to set me free from that penalty. I prayed with my counselor right there and committed my life to Jesus Christ.

**AFTER**

As I grew physically I also grew spiritually. I find that when I try to do things my way and leave God out of the picture, I have the same struggles as everyone else. But when I let Him be in control, I experience a peace that can only come from Him. But the greatest thing of all is that I know for certain that I have eternal life.

## TESTIMONY WORKSHEET FORMAT 1. ADULT CONVERSION

Below is a list of questions for an Adult Conversion testimony. Jot down thoughts under each question. This will give you a basis from which to write sentences and paragraphs about your own experience as you prepare your first draft for Session 8.

### BEFORE:

1. What was a deep inner need in your life before you met Christ?
  
2. Give some examples of how you tried to meet or fulfill that need with unsatisfactory solutions.

### HOW:

1. Describe the circumstances that caused you to consider Christ.
  
2. State how you trusted Christ. (Briefly include the gospel).

### AFTER:

1. Give an example of how Christ met or is currently meeting your deep inner needs.
  
2. End with a statement to the effect that you know for certain that you have eternal life.

After you have filled in the Testimony Worksheet and are ready to start writing you may find it difficult to know how to begin. The following examples may trigger some ideas for you:

- A few years ago I found myself lacking (deep inner need) in my life. (Develop the inner need.) I tried to meet that need by (develop the unsatisfactory solutions).
- A search for (deep inner need) would be the way you could have described my life not too long ago. (Develop the inner need.) I kept (develop the unsatisfactory solutions), but those things did not work.
- At one point in my life I was searching for (deep inner need), but nothing I did would satisfy that need. I tried (develop the unsatisfactory solutions).
- Not too long ago you could have characterized my life as/by (deep inner need). (Develop the inner need.) The things I tried did not help. (Develop the unsatisfactory solutions.)

TESTIMONY WORKSHEET  
FORMAT 2: EARLY CONVERSION/  
ADULT DEEPER COMMITMENT

Below is a list of questions for an Early Conversion/Adult Deeper Commitment testimony. Jot down thoughts under each question. This will give you a basis from which to write sentences and paragraphs about your own experience as you prepare your first draft for Session 8.

**BEFORE DEEPER COMMITMENT:**

1. What was a deep inner need you were trying to fill?
  
2. Give some examples of how you tried to fill that inner need through unsatisfactory solutions.

**HOW:**

1. Briefly describe the situation in which you made a deeper commitment to Christ.
  
2. Refer back to your conversion experience. State how you trusted Christ. Briefly include the gospel.

**AFTER:**

1. State how Christ is currently meeting your deep inner needs.
  
2. End with a statement to the effect that you know for certain that you have eternal life.

After you have filled in the Testimony Worksheet and are ready to start writing, you may find it difficult to know how to begin. The following examples may trigger some ideas for you.

- A few years ago I found myself lacking (deep inner need) in my life. (Develop the inner need.) I tried to meet that need by (develop the unsatisfactory solutions).
- A search for (deep inner need) would be the way you could have described my life not too long ago. (Develop the inner need.) I kept (develop the unsatisfactory solutions), but those things did not work.
- At one point in my life I was searching for (deep inner need), but nothing I did would satisfy that need. I tried (develop the unsatisfactory solutions).
- Not too long ago you could have characterized my life as/by (deep inner need). (Develop the inner need.) The things I tried did not help. (Develop the unsatisfactory solutions.)

TESTIMONY WORKSHEET  
FORMAT 3: EARLY CONVERSION/  
CONSISTENT GROWTH

Below is a list of questions for an Early Conversion/Consistent Growth testimony. Jot down thoughts under each question. This will give you a basis from which to write sentences and paragraphs about your own experience as you prepare your first draft.

**BEFORE:**

1. State the deep inner needs you see people trying to fill.
  
2. Describe how you see people trying to satisfy those needs.

**HOW:**

1. Explain why you never experienced this problem.
  
2. Refer back to your conversion experience. State how you trusted Christ. Briefly include the gospel.

**AFTER:**

1. Illustrate how Christ met or is meeting your deep inner needs.
  
2. End with a statement to the effect that you know for certain that you have eternal life.

**After you have** filled in the Testimony Worksheet and are ready to start writing, you may find it difficult to know how to begin. The following examples may trigger some ideas for you.

- As I look around me I see people lacking (deep inner need) in their lives. (Develop the deep inner need.) They try to fill that void or those needs by (develop unsatisfactory solutions).
- I feel that many people are searching for (deep inner need). (Develop deep inner need.) They try many things to meet their need, such as (develop unsatisfactory solutions).