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write your story of faith



apprentice

Using Acts 26 as a Guide for Writing a Testimony

¹Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You have permission to speak for yourself." So Paul motioned with his hand and began his defense: ²"King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate to stand before you today as I make my defense against all the accusations of the Jews, ³and especially so because you are well acquainted with all the Jewish customs and controversies. Therefore, I beg you to listen to me patiently.

Paul starts with respect for his hearers. If we start with a condescending tone, we've already lost them.

⁴"The Jews all know the way I have lived ever since I was a child, from the beginning of my life in my own country, and also in Jerusalem. ⁵They have known me for a long time and can testify, if they are willing, that according to the strictest sect of our religion, I lived as a Pharisee.

He identifies how he sought to earn God's favor on his own. If you believed you could do that, you can include it in your testimony.

⁶And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. ⁷This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night.

He describes the hope of the gospel – it includes the importance of Jesus' resurrection. For Paul and the early church this was essential to the gospel message.

O king, it is because of this hope that the Jews are accusing me. ⁸Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?

⁹"I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰And that is just what I did in Jerusalem. On the authority of the chief priests I put many of the saints in prison, and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them. ¹¹Many a time I went from one synagogue to another to have them punished, and I tried to force them to blaspheme. In my obsession against them, I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.

He acknowledges his sin, specifically, but without graphic details. This is more than a generalized "I was a sinner."



¹²"On one of these journeys I was going to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. ¹³About noon, O king, as I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, blazing around me and my companions. ¹⁴We all fell to the ground, and I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'
¹⁵"Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?'
" 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied.

Paul describes his encounter with Jesus. Note this is not just believing in God, but believing in Jesus. Not all of us have such a dramatic experience or even a single moment in time we can point to. Simply ask yourself, "What events or people in my life caused me to encounter Christ?"

¹⁶'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen of me and what I will show you. ¹⁷I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them ¹⁸to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

He describes the call to becoming a follower of Jesus. It's more than personal, internal change; our belief should result in outward active change as well.

¹⁹"So then, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. ²⁰First to those in Damascus, then to those in Jerusalem and in all Judea, and to the Gentiles also, I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds. ²¹That is why the Jews seized me in the temple courts and tried to kill me. ²²But I have had God's help to this very day, and so I stand here and testify to small and great alike. I am saying nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would happen – ²³that the Christ would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would proclaim light to his own people and to the Gentiles."

Finally, Paul explains how he responded and the difference believing in Jesus has made in his life. You should mention the changes you have seen since you believed.



Example: Kelly Brady's Faith Story

Born in October, 1968, the middle of three children, I was raised by my mother in a single-parent home. One of my earliest childhood memories is leaving the house for church on Sunday mornings with my mother, brother and sister, while my father was parked on the couch reading the Sunday newspaper, still in his bathrobe and completely disinterested in spiritual matters. I remember thinking at the time that if he would join us at church then maybe his relationship with mom would get better. After two years of marital counseling they divorced when I was twelve.

It was through the divorce of my parents that the effects of sin in our family, as well as my own sinfulness, became vividly apparent. I saw clearly that sin is present in all people, causing people to act selfish toward one another and driving people apart. Understanding the impact of sin, it became obvious that we are all in need of God's forgiveness and restoration. For example, I had a growing bitterness toward my parents for their failed marriage and the damage it had done to our family. My bitterness fueled other sinful addictions in my life, doing even more damage to me and my family.

During those difficult years though God began to reveal himself as the only eternally-loving and immovably-secure relationship in the world and I received Jesus as my personal Savior and was baptized. The decision to receive Jesus as Savior happened gradually, over the course of several months. Being a person of faith, mom continued to take us to church even as her marriage to my father was failing. For many, many months I sat on the back pew of the church during Sunday morning worship, unconvinced by the message of God's love for me. "If God loves us, then why is life so painful?" I asked him many times.

Over time, I realized that God's love for us is demonstrated in Jesus' death and resurrection. The death of Jesus on the cross provides forgiveness for sin, and the resurrection of Jesus from the grave provides life and the only real hope for restoration. Even though we face difficulties in this life, Jesus' resurrection power gives us the strength to face difficulties and the confidence that we will one day be fully restored. I remember sharing with my father my decision to receive Jesus as Savior not long after being baptized, but it was not until the age of 65, and only after contracting a mentally and physically crippling disease, that he recognized his need for God's forgiveness and the hope of the resurrection.

God was faithful to care for me throughout my teenage years and into adulthood. He has restored much of the damage sin did to me and my family, providing freedom from bitterness and unity for our family through forgiveness. Even the addictions that I had cultivated, in order to cope with the pain of divorce, have been restored.

Sincerely,

Kelly Brady
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