

## **Session 3**

# **Sharing and Bringing Others to Christ**

1. Initiating Conversations about Christ
2. Bringing Christ into the Conversation
3. The Four Ways of Sharing Christ
4. How to Prepare a Personal Testimony
5. How to Give Your Personal Testimony

## Initiating Conversations about Christ

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Most people who witness or who have attempted to witness find that the most difficult aspect of sharing Christ is moving a conversation towards Christ without turning the other person off or getting into irrelevant *religious discussions*. The following material should be helpful in initiating conversations about Christ.

### Life-Style Principles which Enhance Opportunities

- **Listen.** Every person has a favorite subject - themselves. Even the most reticent person will share if the subject is of interest to him/her and he/she senses that we really want to hear. If we are really interested and listen, we can ask the most penetrating questions and people will respond.
  1. Look people in the eye.
  2. Smile. Have a pleasant countenance.
  3. Ask questions which begin with "how" or "why."
- **Be Alert to Opportunities.** It is amazing how many opportunities will come our way if we are asking God for them. We must listen for ways people are asking us about Jesus without really asking us. They do this by sharing an open nerve, boredom, meaninglessness, guilt, loneliness, etc.
- **Be Friendly to All.** The person we think least likely to accept Christ may be the ripest fruit. We may be the only people really being warm to them and it could open the door for ministry.
- **Serve People.** Our service to people lays the foundation for ministry.
- **Slowdown.** We must take time to talk to people over a cup of coffee.
- **Give Honest Compliments.** We must be free with genuine praise.
- **Watch for Areas of Needs and Stress.** We must show compassion by indicating a parallel situation in our own life and how we dealt with it through the power of Jesus.

### Always remember that it is the Lord who will open doors

When the time is right, the Lord himself will open every avenue. His time is not our time. When he is in a hurry it takes him only 100 years.

**Accept people where they are**

This does not mean that you leave them there. *“Have respect for the spiritual situation of those being evangelized. Respect their tempo and pace. No one has the right to force them excessively.”* (Pope Paul VI)

## Bringing Christ into the Conversation

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Remember, courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is taking action in the midst of fear. The following are nine creative ways of bringing Christ into conversation.

1. If someone knows that we are “religious”, we should ask, “Have I ever shared with you how I got interested in spiritual things?”
2. If people compliment our family, love, service, etc., we could say, “You know, if you had known me ten years ago, you probably could not have said that.” If it is not the right time or place to share Christ, we may say, “Sometime when we have 15 minutes, I would like to share with you what changed my life.”
3. If we are talking to a lapsed catholic we may be able to say, “I used to feel like you ... I had a lot of difficulties about the church, but I do not any more. Let me tell you what happened.” We must always remember that it is highly probable that the excuse given for falling away is not the real one. Very often it is a camouflage for something deeper. So we must not take the initial excuse too seriously. We must bypass it, and let them know that life with Jesus is really exciting. We know, because we are experiencing it all the time.
4. As we get to know non-Christians on a personal basis, they will begin to confide in us about their burdens, longings, aspirations and emptiness. As they tell us these things, we can say quietly, - if our experience was similar - “You know, I used to feel like that until I had an experience that completely changed my outlook on life. Would you like for me to tell you about it?” If our experience has not been parallel to the one described to us by our non-Christian friends, but Christ is a reality to us today, we can say, “You know, I would feel that way except for an experience that changed my outlook on life. Would you like for me to tell you about it?”
5. If we know someone for quite a time and have never shared Christ, we may say, “Bill, I need to ask your forgiveness. I have known you for two years and have never shared the most meaningful thing in my life with you.”
6. If somebody complains about the world, we could say, “Have you ever considered Christ’s diagnosis and remedy for the world?”
7. In a discussion about the day’s headlines, the latest world crisis, or some other current event, the query, “What do you think is wrong with the world?” may be appropriate. After listening while various external causes are blamed for humanity’s problems, we can ask, “Have you ever considered what Jesus Christ said about that?” and then refer to his diagnosis of the human person in Mark 7:21-23.

8. To bring up spiritual things we may ask:
  - a. Are you interested in spiritual things? Whether they answer yes or no, we could ask:
  - b. Who do you think is a real Christian? Usually they will say what a “real Christian” does – go to church, live a good life, pray, etc. If they answer in this line then we may respond:
  - c. I agree those things are true. But they are things a real Christian does. Could I share with you who the Bible says a real Christian is?
9. If spiritual things have come up, we could ask two diagnostic questions. The answer will give us an indication as to where the person is spiritually:
  - a. **Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you know that you have eternal life?** The answer always is either a yes or a no. If the answer is “maybe” or “I hope so,” we should consider it a no answer.
  - b. **Suppose you stood before God today. If he asked you, “Why should I let you into heaven?”** How would you answer God? The answer will always be based on faith or works.

## The Four Ways of Sharing Christ

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Usually when we think of sharing Christ verbally, we think of actually presenting the gospel. In actuality there are four different ways of sharing Christ. On almost any day of our lives we will have the opportunity to witness in one of these four ways:

### 1. Words of Truth

This is simply a truth about God. Examples would be to say, “God has given us a beautiful day”, “Children are one of **God’s** most precious gifts,” or “Those beautiful stars just show me again that there is a **God** behind the universe.” **Words of truth** can easily be shared in the most casual encounter. John the Baptizer shared a word of **truth** as he acknowledged Christ as “*the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29).

### 2. Testimony

This is sharing our stories. The greatest thing about our testimony is that it cannot be refuted. Nobody can argue with our personal experience. We must remember that a testimony does not have to be about how we became Christians. A **testimony** can share what God did for us today, yesterday or in some past circumstance. Andrew shared such a **testimony** when he said to his brother Peter, “*We have found the Messiah*” (John 1:41).

*“Modern man/woman listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he/she does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses” (Pope Paul VI).*

### 3. Gospel

This is actually sharing with somebody how **they** can come to know Jesus Christ.

*“Hearing this (Peter’s Pentecost sermon) they were cut to the heart and they said to Peter and the apostles: ‘What must we do?’ “ (Acts 2:37)*

### 4. Invitation

We explain what our prayer meeting is all about and then invite them the following week. We show them how excited and pleased we would be if the invitation is accepted.

## Group Study

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The potential for a church's growth rests in the number of lapsed and "unchurched" in its particular area. We are always on the lookout as a church for people who need the message of the gospel of Christ or the fellowship offered in the local church. There are many to be reached.

A poll taken by George Gallup in the Spring of 1980 revealed some interesting facts concerning those who do not now participate in church.

1. 50% of the unchurched see themselves becoming active members of the church in the near future. They have already made a decision in the back of their minds to make a step toward the Body of Christ. They know they should and are planning in vague terms to come back to the church. All we need is to help encourage them. They are waiting for an invitation.
2. Four out of five unchurched families want their children to have some spiritual nurture and education. If we cannot get the parents, they may be more than willing to allow us to have their children to be taught.
3. Two thirds of the unchurched pray, believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and believe in life after death. These people may have faith without good works. They could easily be cultivated to put their faith into action and become faithful followers.

Gallup concluded: "We are dealing with a people of deep, religious roots, roots that, when watered with kindness and compassion, will once more grow." We need tube watering so God can give the increase.

**Based on what you just read, what are some things you can do to involve the unchurched around you:**



## **Bible Study 2: Initiating Conversation**

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Read John 4:5 – 15. Mark the passage as you read by underlining it, etc. As a group, discuss the following questions:

1. In this encounter between Jesus and the woman at the well, what specific things did Jesus do or say to arouse the woman’s spiritual interest?

2. Look at your oikos list. Using this list and your own ideas, write down three ways you could introduce Christ to a member of your oikos.

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C. \_\_\_\_\_  
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## Role Playing

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We learn best when we see an action taking place and as a disinterested party we can be objective about what is happening.

Be observant and make notes as you watch the situation unfold.

### **Situation 1 – “Lapsed Catholic Family”**

You are walking with your spouse and come across your neighbor whose car won't start.

You and your spouse have been discussing evangelization. What would you do?

Your neighbor knows you and that you are a member of Holy Spirit Church.

### **Situation 2 – “The Uninvolved Parishioner”**

You are in the supermarket with friends. The discussion turns to activities in the parish. One of the people you are with is vehemently against the activity. What would you do?

### **Situation 3 – “The Unchurched Person”**

At work a person you know is having difficulty with work and family. He can't seem to get it together. He is turned off to practically everything and is negative about God. What would you do?

In all the above situations you are suspected of being a practicing Catholic.

## **How to Prepare a Personal Testimony**

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Any subject matter can be presented more effectively by careful organization. A carefully prepared testimony, empowered by the Holy Spirit, can be of immediate and effective use in nearly every witnessing situation. It should be our desire to present Christ in such a clear, attractive, yet simple way, that those who hear, will not only want to know Him, too, but they will also know “how” to know Him personally.

### **When you are asked to share your testimony, be sure to:**

1. Share it with loving enthusiasm in the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).
2. Speak loudly and clearly in a natural, relaxed tone of voice (avoid ministerial “twang”).
3. Avoid mannerisms when you speak, such as: rubbing your nose, jingling coins in your pocket, swaying, clearing your throat and using “uhs” and “ahs”.
4. Avoid arguing and other high pressure methods or getting a “decision” for Christ. Remember men are “born of the Spirit, not through the persuasiveness or logic of men, though God may use both.
5. Avoid preaching at people. Present your testimony, don’t preach.
6. Smile often! Ask the Lord to give you a happy, radiant race.
7. Memorize your testimony and practice it until it becomes natural.

## How to Give Your Personal Testimony

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*“Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.” (Paul VI, On Evangelization in the Modern World)*

**Goal:** To share the Gospel in terms of how Jesus Christ has personally intervened in my life and transformed me so that I am a new creation.

**Objectives:** Participants will be able to share concisely and effectively in approximately 300 words, written and orally, their personal testimony.

### A. Introduction: Preliminary Considerations

#### 1. The Holy Spirit

It is important to know that the power of the Holy Spirit is in our lives when we share our testimony with others.

*Romans 1:16 “I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God leading everyone who believes in it to salvation . . .” (cf. also 1 Cor 4:20)*

#### 2. We are the bait

Your testimony is precious in God’s eyes. You are bearing the good news to someone else for Him in obedience to His call. God is using you as an instrument of salvation in another’s life. You are the bait.

#### 3. Always be ready

*1 Peter 3:15-16 “Venerate the Lord, that is, Christ, in your hearts. Should anyone ask you the reason for this hope of yours be ever ready to reply but speak gently and respectfully.”*

Once you have a testimony to give, you can use it with every opportunity that the Lord gives you.

#### 4. St. Paul used his testimony

St. Paul gave his testimony as recorded in Acts as a powerful way to evangelize others.

It was an extremely effective and natural way for Paul to communicate God's intervention in His life. It was the power of the gospel as Paul had experienced it in his life.

(See Acts 22 & 26:1-29; Phil. 3:5-16; 1Tim. 1:12-17)

## **B. What is a personal testimony?**

### **1. The subjective Gospel**

A personal testimony is the Good News as presented in terms of your own experience.

It is the “subjective” or “experiential” side of the Gospel as opposed to the objective truths of the Gospel message.

### **2. The “Who” in our life**

It is a sharing about your relationship with a Divine Person. Jesus is the Divine Person you are primarily witnessing about. Jesus is the one who is to be glorified in your testimony.

### **3. The “What”**

A personal testimony is not only sharing the “who” but the “what” He has done. Something has happened because of Him and we are excited about sharing it.

## **C. Why give your personal testimony?**

### **1. Non-Confrontational**

When you share your personal story with someone, it does not appear that you are trying to convince them of anything.

Very often people are touched because you are opening your life to them.

### **2. Essential because personal**

Your personal testimony is an essential aspect of evangelization. The Gospel means very little unless it has changed you.

A testimony makes the facts of salvation, the reality of God's Kingdom concrete, real, specific and personal.

It puts flesh and bones on the truths of salvation.

*Evangelii Nuntiandi:*

#21 Witness of life involves presence, sharing, and solidarity.

#26 Our witness is to the Father's love in our lives.

#29 Evangelization touches one's whole life.

(also see #20; #22; #27; #41; #42)

### **3. Experience speaks for itself**

A person cannot argue with your experience. (They always can argue with your interpretation of it. In order to reject what has happened to you, one would have to reject you. Most people are not willing to do that.)

### **4. Power**

There is great power in a personal testimony (Point A4 above).

### **5. Grabs interest**

Everyone likes to hear a good story.

## **D. Preparing your testimony**

### **1. First: which kind?**

Decide, first of all what kind of testimony would be best:

Three basic kinds:

- a. Personal conversion testimony
- b. A deepening of one's relationship with God (His intervention).  
For example: "baptism in the Holy Spirit.
- c. Community (parish) testimony.

This kind "of testimony reflects how God is working in your parish, prayer group, or other local body. The Community testimony generally does not witness to a change, but a continuing quality of the body that expresses the presence of God.

You need to identify with your prospect and suit your testimony to his needs.

We will show you how to give a conversion testimony.

## 2. Second: Select one concept

Keep your testimony simple and centered around one event.

<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>
Fear	Courage
Hatred	Love
Weakness	Strength
Aimlessness	Purpose
Despair	Hope
Sickness	Health
Guilt	Acceptance
Bondage	Freedom
Loneliness	Community
Rebelliousness	Obedience

## 3. Third: Arrange into three parts

### a. Before you gave your life to the Lord

- give some background; your family, age, work, interests, etc.
- speak about the good part of your past life. (Acts 22:1–5; 26:4–5)
- relate the problem area, or bad part of your past life. (Acts 26:9–11)
- don't overemphasize the bad things that happened.
- don't overemphasize this-entire section
- use concrete details
- make it colorful, interesting & humorous.

### b. God's intervention and your conversion

- relate it as a fact. Don't just say it happened. Say what happened. Be specific.
- concentrate on Christ, not on yourself. Emphasize the reality of Christ and your new relationship with Him.

The key is what God did and your response to that.

The main point of the entire testimony is Jesus Christ & the change in your life. ( See Acts 26:12-19 ).

c. Your life since then

- express specifically and clearly, the difference what is new; how you are different
- make the change significant and attractive. Make it look like something someone would want.
- but don't exaggerate. Don't give the impression that life is a bowl of cherries.
- share the benefits of having a new (or deeper) relationship with Christ. (e.g. new outlook on life, forgiveness, freedom from fear, anger, etc.) The key is that you are different because of Him.

**4. Don't use clichés, jargon or institutional terms**

**5. Be concrete**

Use picture language if you can. Paint the picture of a real-life situation.

Use specific instances. Don't generalize, be abstract or vague.

**6. Don't give a travelogue**

**7. We suggest not using the name of "Jesus Christ" in your testimony.**

There are three major reasons:

- 1) You don't want to "give away the goods." You will awaken interest in "what is to come;"
- 2) You'll be speaking of Christ later and you don't want to repeat yourself;
- 3) It is a good exercise to first "tone down" your testimony and later you may make it more dramatic.

**E. On your own time, read over prayerfully the "Dos and Don'ts in Giving a Personal Testimony"**

## F. Sample Testimonies

### Example: A Poor Testimony

Praise God! I'm a Spirit-filled Catholic. I was baptized in water, then baptized in the Holy Spirit. I have been delivered from sin, death and the evil one. The Sacraments of Initiation never meant anything before, but now I see the power of salvation pouring through them. Amen! Hallelujah! I have experienced the release of God's power in my life and in Christ who strengthens me I can do anything. I lost my job and most of my friends and the devil has been hassling me ever since I came to know the Lord in a personal way. But I have victory in Christ through the intercession of the Saints. I love the Pope and fully support the Magisterial teaching of the Church. I am full of hope for my salvation as long as I persevere in running the race.

### Example: A Good Testimony

For many years I struggled with anger. It was hard to control. It would seem to pop up out of nowhere. I was very embarrassed about it. I could get angry at the smallest things and there appeared to be no reason for it. I guess I would just build up a head of steam like a black steam engine and let it all at once out.

I can remember leaving a meeting with several people one night full of anger. I was mad at every one of them. I walked around for hours trying to do something with my anger. After a few hours, I could not even remember why I was so angry. You know, today I can't remember why I was so angry either!

I came to know a person who told me that I could actually overcome such intense anger and that I could have genuine peace to take its place. I wanted that so much but I didn't know how to go about getting it. This person told me that I could have peace as a gift from God that He could give me the strength to deal with my anger. I decided to give it a try. I accepted God's gift and felt a new strength to deal with my anger. I became a very changed person. I began to experience God being close to me and helping me to grow in peacefulness.

My life has, since then, been very different. I am a changed person! I am certainly not perfect and I can't control my anger all the time, but anger doesn't run my life anymore. People tell me I am far more peaceful, especially my wife. When my children act up, I don't get irritated so easily. I certainly am much happier and more interested in life than I was before. I try to use my abilities and energy to help others rather than focusing primarily on myself like I used to do. Because I accepted God's gift I am not so self-centered which always seemed to feed my anger. I am more people-oriented and outward-looking.

## Do's and Don'ts in Giving a Testimony

### Do

1. Realize that your testimony is precious in the sight of God and that you are the bearer of Good News for Him.
2. Pray. Depend upon the power of God, not on your own wisdom, wit or charm.
3. Write out your testimony and practice giving it privately in order to gain confidence.
  - a. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom and guidance as you write your testimony (see James 1:5.6).
  - b. Write in such a way that others will feel associated with you in past and present experiences.
  - c. Edit carefully and rewrite as necessary before final draft.
4. Begin with an interesting, attention-getting sentence and close with a good conclusion. Include relevant, thought-provoking secular facts and experiences.
5. Present the person of Jesus and how He worked in your life. Use his name.
6. Use real life situations. Follow a three-point outline: "My Life With Christ"
  - a. Life *before* knowing Christ.
  - b. *How* you came to know Christ (be specific).
  - c. Life *after* you received Christ (changes He has made – what He means to you now).
7. Emphasize point "c" above, if you became a Christian as a small child.
8. Share the positive benefits of coming to a personal relationship with Christ. Give enough details to arouse interest.
9. Study your Bible daily. Use at least one, but at the most two, Scripture verses.
10. Be ready to tailor or adapt your testimony to the listener.
11. Use elements of your life the listener can best relate to (sports, travel, cars, school).
12. Speak confidently, no need for insecurity, but don't cause a confrontation.

13. Tell your story in an interesting way. Good storytelling is an effective and useful art.
14. Be able to adapt to the appropriate amount of time (1, 2, 10 minutes).
15. Recognize that you will need to leave out many things.
16. Look into the eyes of the listener. Don't let your eyes run all over the place (If you are talking with a group, don't stare over their heads, make eye contact with several people in different parts of the room).
17. Use humor constructively. If the situation becomes tense, you can relieve the prospect's anger by saying something funny.
18. Speak in pictures. Use situations that people can visualize. If they are not seeing in their minds the thing you are talking about, they are probably seeing something else rather than listening to you.

### **Don't**

1. Preach
2. Use too excessive words such as: "saved", "convicted", "converted", "born again" and "sin", do not communicate truth to the average Christian. Though these words and phrases are precious to us, they are too often misunderstood and consequently ridiculed by non-Christians.
3. Be too wordy, beat around the bush or emphasize how bad you used to be.
4. Speak in glittering generalities.
5. Give the impression that Christian life is "a bed of roses".
6. Speak negatively about people (teachers, parents) or institutions (church, society).
7. Use too much time.
8. Give travelogues. Long, rambling, overly detailed testimonies are boring.
9. Be vague in relating the events of salvation.
10. Go into detail of past sins.
11. Use cliché words such as "sanctified", "justified", "charismatic", "I was saved", etc.

12. Give your testimony in your strength but in the power of God.
13. Use glittering generalities that make life seem like peaches and cream.
14. Exaggerate or build up for effect – the straightforward story is the most effective.
15. Hold your Bible in your hands without referring to it. It may seem as if you are trying to say “I know it all”. It’s best to use a small pocket Bible.
16. Glance at your watch frequently.
17. Answer questions you intend to ask later. Don’t give away the mystery.

## **Individual Study**

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### **Write your testimony**

Take 20 to 30 minutes to write your personal testimony. It should consist of about 300 words and only be about 3 or 4 minutes long. Use the “Personal Testimony Worksheet” if it helps you.

### **Share your testimony with your prayer group**

Ask for feedback and suggestions. Use the “Testimony Evaluation Guide” if it helps you.

### **Re-write your testimony the following tonight**

## **Personal Testimony Worksheet**

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Before I received Christ I lived and thought this way:

How I received Christ:

After I received Christ these changes took place:

Pertinent or favorite verse which I might close:



**Session 3: Study Checklist and Completion Sheet**

Name:

Group Leader:

- Read Chapters 2 and 3 in *On Evangelization in the Modern World*.
- Read “What is Evangelization” in *Go and Make Disciples*.
- Completed Bible Studies 1 and 2.
- Wrote a three minute personal testimony

How do you feel about your oikos list?