

Simple Evangelism Series #3  
**Personal Stories**  
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**INTRODUCTION**

**A. On Sunday nights we're talking about something I call "simple evangelism"**

1. Matthew 28:18-20 -- 18 And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." NASU
2. That passage is one of several that tells us our mission in the world
  - a. but I think we would agree that the common perception is that reaching the lost is a hard, complicated job
  - b. we don't do much evangelizing, largely because of two reasons
    - 1) we're not convinced it's our job
    - 2) we think we can't do the job
  - c. so we need not only to convince Christians they have a responsibility to reach the lost, but to simplify things and make the job do-able
3. What I really hope to do in this series is to convince you that there are countless ways we can turn everyday activities into soul-winning activities

**B. We've talked about two ways to begin reaching out to others**

1. Inviting people to visit our assemblies
2. Giving away things that open doors, break down barriers, create awareness, and generally gives you an opportunity with people
3. None of this is hard or complicated, and it's within the abilities of us all

**C. Tonight I want to talk about a way to powerfully connect with people by using your personal story to create interest and openness in others**

1. This is one of those areas we have shied away from
  - a. the idea of "witnessing" is not our thing, some even calling it unscriptural
  - b. we've been trained to be very private with our personal faith
  - c. some believe that people don't want to hear our personal testimony, or that it detracts from the gospel – nothing could be further from truth
2. I purposely used two words that carry a lot of negative baggage for us
  - a. "witnessing" and "testimony"
  - b. because these are big among various denominations, we have avoided them like the plague

3. Tonight, I'm going to show you the biblical way to think about these things, give you a less inflammatory term to use, and help you see the legitimate place of your own life experiences in helping reach others with the gospel

## I. LET'S DEAL WITH THE IDEA OF WITNESSING AND TESTIMONY

### A. The major problem we seem to have had is a perceived conflict with the stated role of the apostles

1. Acts 1:8 -- 8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." NASU
2. Acts 1:21-22 -- 21 "Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us — 22 beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us — one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection." NASU
3. Acts 2:32 -- 32 "This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. NASU
4. The point is important – the apostles of Jesus Christ were called to testify to, or be witnesses in a very special way
  - a. they testified or gave witness to the entire ministry of Jesus, something not everybody could do
  - b. they testified or gave witness to the resurrection of Jesus, something not everybody could do
  - c. in this sense, the apostles provided testimony and witness in a unique way that cannot be duplicated today by anybody
5. We still need their testimony and witness today because it is how we determine the validity of the identity, the claims, the promises, and more of Jesus Christ
  - a. nobody can be an eyewitness of the resurrection today
  - b. nobody can give testimony to the ministry of Jesus like the apostles
6. So, let's get this out of way up front – I'm not talking about being a witness, or giving testimony, in the same way the apostles did

### B. In fact, though I believe the words “witness” and “testimony” do not violate any scripture, I think we could use a better term to refer to what we can offer people

1. The term I like is “personal stories”
  - a. it's amazing how changing the terms sometimes ease our minds
  - b. I think you will still be providing witness to God's work in your life, and you will give testimony to tell others about it
  - c. but if it helps, then use the idea of personal story
2. The concept is this: we can use our personal story to open doors, create interest, and connect with people so they will listen to the gospel of Jesus

C. I think it is simply a way for us to use our personal life experiences to accomplish the mission God gave us, and our personal story is an excellent tool

1. Mt 5:13ff – you are the salt of the earth.... you are the light of the world
  - a. why purposely make our saltiness unsalty?
  - b. why purposely hide our light instead of letting it shine?
  - c. this passage is one in which Jesus intentionally said that we must allow ourselves to be used for God’s glory
  
2. Romans 10:8-9 -- 8 But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART" — that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, 9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; NASU
  - a. for a people who don’t believe much in rituals or formalism, we sure have created one out of the “confession”
    - 1) we seem to think that this means only that confession makes in responding to the gospel, right before baptism
    - 2) but this is a confession that goes far beyond a one-time thing
  - b. what really counts here is a faith that is made public
  
3. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 -- 18 Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. NASU
  - a. ours is a ministry of reconciliation, reconciling people to God
  - b. have you been reconciled to God?
  - c. you need to know that others need to hear about that, to know and to see how that worked in your life
  - d. it’s the reason that personal experience books are so popular – people have a great need to know that others have the same problems they do, and that they discovered answers to those problems
  
4. 1 Peter 3:15 -- 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; NASU
  - a. Peter is about as plain as one can be – be ready to make a defense
    - 1) the idea behind the word used is that of an argument or explanation
    - 2) not like arguing angrily with someone, but a reasoned statement that explains your faith
  - b. with gentleness and reverence, we can explain the reasons for our own faith, why we believe, why we trust the Lord
  - c. that is a powerful tool for communicating with others because it focuses on the positives about ourselves while avoiding any negative about them

## II. PAUL PROVIDES AN EXAMPLE OF A PERSONAL STORY

### A. The conversion of Saul is found in Acts 9:1-19

1. Twice, Paul himself uses his personal story to open the door of opportunity
  - a. the first was in Acts 22, where he used his personal story to address his fellow Jews – to a rather unsuccessful end, I might add
  - b. the second was in Acts 26 where Paul again recounted his personal story to Agrippa and Festus
2. When you read these two accounts, several things are worth noting
  - a. Paul made it a very personal story, including things about himself, his background and history
  - b. he related the facts that demonstrated his activities as an unbeliever, his persecution of the church, and his intent to punish Christians
  - c. he related the facts that told of his experience on the Damascus road
  - d. he talked about how that event provided the critical experience in causing him to become a believer
  - e. he used those things to tell others that they too should consider what Jesus might mean to them
3. In the course of his personal story, did he give testimony to some things that neither you or I could bear witness to – yes!
  - a. but don't miss the fact that Paul used a personal story
  - b. it is a tool that is extremely valuable, whether or not the people who hear it respond positively or negatively

### B. Paul does what Peter said we all should do

1. Acts 26:2 -- 2 "In regard to all the things of which I am accused by the Jews, I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I am about to make my defense before you today; NASU
  - a. "defense" is a form of the same word Peter used
  - b. 1 Peter 3:15 -- 15 but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; NASU
2. Paul was giving a reasoned explanation for his faith, something all of us can do

## III. SOME THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT USING YOUR PERSONAL STORY

### A. It usually works best in the context of a conversation with another person

1. I'm not really talking tonight about getting up and giving a public speech
2. I'm talking more about a conversation where you can share personally with one or a few people
3. In that context, your personal story is no threat, but a powerful tool

**B. It's not a form of debate, arguing, or conflict with others**

1. In fact, we've done more harm than good with debating and arguing
2. When you relate your story, you're just telling others about yourself
3. I suggest you purposely avoid coming across as "correcting" others – just tell your story and let the facts do the talking

**C. Your personal story is basically a way to share what God has done in your life, and how he's done it**

1. It involves telling where you were, what problems you faced, mistakes you made, etc.
2. It involves telling what you learned, why it was meaningful, and how God used people, events, and more in your life
3. It involves being very personal, and that is a powerful testimony to God's work in you

**D. Don't make the mistake of thinking yours has to be some exciting, jaw-dropping, amazing story**

1. Some people have such stories, and they should tell them
2. Most of us have rather plain stories, but don't assume they aren't meaningful
3. If you'll really tell your story, you might be surprised when others think it's more exciting than we do
4. It's often the struggle, or questions, or problems we faced that will touch others, even when it's not shocking or fodder for a TV series

**E. Make your personal story more about Jesus than about you**

1. Don't get the idea that you have to unload a truckload of your garbage – just tell enough that people can understand where you're coming from
2. Talk more about Jesus, about what you've learned from scripture that has truly helped you, and why you trust Jesus so much
3. Remember your mission – it's not about you, it's about Jesus
4. Your story is a tool, not the focal point

**F. Everybody has a story to share**

1. Yes, that includes you!
2. It is far more important than you know

## CONCLUSION

- A. Sharing your personal story is both biblical and a powerful way to open doors of opportunity with other people
- B. Sharing your personal story in no way conflicts with proper role of the apostles as witnesses of the ministry and resurrection of Jesus Christ
- C. Sharing your personal story is something only you can do, which makes it something completely unique to you
- D. Invitation