

THE PLACE OF PERSONAL TESTIMONY IN COMMUNICATING THE GOSPEL

"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20) That is the personal testimony of a Christian who spent his new life in Christ communicating the gospel. Although you might not have been called by God to preach the gospel in a full-time ministry like the Apostle Paul, you still have a ministry in communicating the gospel to your neighbors in your every day life. Are you telling others what Jesus means to you? The Apostle Paul did and so should you and I.

It's important when speaking to an unchurched person about Christ to show from your own experience what faith in Christ means in every day life. The gospel is mainly for bringing people safely into heaven. But it also changes things in our every day life before death. Christ is alive to us here and now! Christianity is not merely dry intellectualism or dead orthodoxy. As Paul says, "I live by faith in the Son of God!"

In deciding what to say about what Jesus means to you, you should be aware of some dangers. Often we hear people on radio or television giving their testimony for Christ, and it is all very subjective. It sounds more like they are bragging about what they have done for Christ, rather than about what Christ has done for them. But when John the Baptist testified about the Savior, he said, "He must increase, I must decrease!" (John 3:30) Our emphasis must always be on Christ and what he did, said, and promises us.

The Apostle Paul testified about his personal relationship with Christ; he was not ashamed of his Savior or the gospel. But whenever he did so, it was to give all credit to God. St. Paul writes, "I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." (1 Cor. 15:9,10)

The real purpose of personal testimony will be to illustrate for someone God's law and gospel as they apply to every day living. A former alcoholic might say, "I've seen how making alcohol my god brought much misery to my family and me, no money, illness, hostility, neglect of responsibility, etc. Now by Christ's grace and power I've been able to leave alcohol alone and to enjoy my family and every day life as never before! Christ really gives us new life!" A witness who has been through a lot of hardships and troubles (perhaps in marriage, raising children, personal health or finances) might mention how the promises of God enabled him/her to cope with life as it is, without running away from it,

and still be strong, vigorous, and joyful. "I've seen how God can make everything work together for our good. I've learned to trust in him for everything!"

But remember, our personal testimony is always just another way of preaching Christ the Savior, not ourselves. Only his gospel is "the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes." Let the emphasis always be on the truths of God's Word. Personal testimony in our witnessing is important.

Let's all prepare ourselves for it carefully as another way to teach what it means to "live by faith in the Son of God!"

This article was taken from the Evangelism material found on WELS.net.