

Word notes Sunday 30/06/13 Tony Hodge
How to share the gospel – Testimony

Summary (read this bit out to remind cell members what was said on Sunday)

Key Texts: Luke 1:1-4, 1 Peter 3:15

We each have a story to tell, each of us is unique and our experience of life just as different from each other, yet we share many things in common. We could include other experiences such as our early life, maybe our teenage years, perhaps struggles in early adulthood, but for anyone that knows Jesus as Saviour there is one big thing in common – we are part of God's family, members of His Kingdom and have a different set of experiences because of that. How does our testimony assist in sharing the Good News?

Testimony – Definition:

1. A formal written or spoken statement, especially one given in a court of law.
2. Evidence or proof of something
3. A public recounting of a religious conversion or experience.
4. Archaic: a solemn protest or declaration.

In a faith context we probably expect to hear the third – a public recounting of our conversion to Christ or an experience of His power in our lives, but this most likely includes aspects of 1 and 2 also, if we stand up in church things are a bit more formal than chatting with mates, and to be effective our testimony should be evidence that God has done something in us. Luke's Gospel starts in such a way that tells us it a statement set out to convince his friend of the truth, he also includes plenty of detail as evidence and refers to people alive at the time as witnesses.

A further example, more of a recounting of a religious conversion experience is in Peter's first great sermon (Acts 2:14-21). Peter starts out by explaining what the crowd had witnessed and adds in reference to scripture. Paul also gave testimony to his own encounter with the risen Jesus, eg in 1 Corinthians 15:3-8.

Testimony – effect

Our testimony takes what could be a nice warm encouraging story and brings it into stark reality with a challenge to the listener. The challenge doesn't come from us demanding a response, more from what we say and allowing the Holy Spirit to speak to the listener. NB at the end of Peter's challenging preach ("*...this Jesus, whom you crucified [is] both Lord and Christ.*") the people were cut to the heart because he spoke the truth with boldness and they ASKED "Brothers what shall we do" – this doesn't mean we shouldn't invite people to respond of course, otherwise we'd never have a call for salvation! It does mean we should lay the foundations through sharing the Good News in all ways and be ready to invite.

Peter's method

In 1 Peter 3:15 Peter encourages us to share our testimony saying: 1, "Always be prepared"; 2, "To everyone who asks you"; 3, With gentleness and respect

Preparation doesn't mean we learn a script, it means being sure of what we'd say and allowing the HS to work with us in all circumstances. Everyone means just that! And to be gentle and respectful means not to ram the gospel down people's throats but to woo them with the truth.

Application (this is the bit where cell members get to participate. Lead discussions around these points)

Give everyone a piece of paper and ask them to write a 6 word testimony, then go round the room with each sharing theirs.

What else can we do to "always be prepared"? Discuss what each either does already or thinks they might do in future to be ready.

Ho do we balance "to everyone" and "with gentleness and respect"?

Witness (this is the bit where the cell talks and prays about how to share the Good News)

What would you like to do over the next week in sharing the Good News? Share the Gosple, you testimony or encourage someone through love, deeds or words? Wrote it down on your 6 word testimony, pray and ask the Lord to make it so!