

BECOMING EFFECTIVE WITNESSES

6

TELLING OUR STORY

1 Timothy 1: 12–17

Part One

By Elizabeth B. Crawford

“God has not called every Christian to preach in stadiums or witness door-to-door or hand out tracts on street corners. But he has called every Christian to be a witness....every Christian can tell his or her story. We can share out of our own experience what God has done in our lives.”

Leighton Ford

“You are a letter from Christ...written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.’ The Spirit writes the love of Jesus, the joy of Jesus, and the authenticity of Jesus on our lives. Witnessing does not mean putting on a spiritual front. Witnessing means being honest about who and what we are. The writing finger of God, writing the story of Jesus across the lives of His people, makes evangelism authentic-- and makes God real to the people around us.”

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“Evangelism is not complete until the evangelized become the evangelists.”

Billy Graham

AIM OF STUDY

- To learn how to tell the story of what God has done in saving us and to write a brief version of it to share it with others.

KEY VERSES

“Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.” 1 Timothy 1:15-16

PREPARATION

Read over the notes on “**how to teach the Bible in small group**” and “**some practical suggestions for leading a small group discussion**” in Vineyard Church of Columbus’ *Small Group Leadership Training Manual*. Before you read over the Scripture, pray that God would give you direction for leading your group and teach you something relevant. Then read through the passage and the Bible study below. **You will need to go over the questions and choose which ones you want to emphasize and which you could eliminate if your time is limited.** Note that the application questions are marked with an asterisk (*). Rather than leaving these to the end of the study, ask one or two as you work through the passage so people are being confronted by Scripture’s truths and applying them to their own lives. If you find you are falling behind schedule and need to move ahead, you could summarize some of the passage and then go to the final questions.

These studies contain more background material and information on the passages than any group will cover in a meeting. The authors are providing this for the leaders’ benefit—to help reduce your study and preparation time; to help resource you for possible questions group members may raise; and to clarify some gray areas of doctrine that may be in your mind as you prepare. Obviously we cannot exhaust any one subject in a document like this, so you may want to do further reading and discuss doctrine with your pastor. We highly recommend *The New Bible Dictionary* or *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* as excellent resources for study.

Also, **print out** copies of “Telling My Story” for each small group member. You will hand it out for them to work on at home and bring back to your next small group meeting.

OPENERS

Why do we love to hear or read a good story? What makes storytelling such a powerful communication tool? Most of us can recall both the content and emotional experience of stories we heard at a young age. Was someone in your family a good storyteller? My husband can mesmerize others with accounts of people he’s met or original adventure tales. A good storyteller will use words, facial expression, and tone of voice to paint

pictures in our minds of different characters or events in their lives. What are some of your favorite stories about? Are they fantasies, folk tales, science fiction or glimpses into the lives of real people?

Allow no more than five minutes for replies by asking people to keep their answers brief. Watch out for those who love to tell stories!

Pray together that God's Spirit would write His truth on your hearts today.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Paul had left Timothy in Ephesus because some men were promoting false teachings and leading members astray. Rather than writing to the leaders of the church, some of whom may have been the guilty ones, Paul wrote to Timothy to reinforce Timothy's authority and to encourage this young disciple to persevere in straightening out the doctrinal errors. Although Paul didn't give a great deal of detail about the errors, they seem to have been related to teaching myths, genealogies, Jewish law (1:7) and forbidding certain foods and marriage (4:4). Paul treats much of the teachings as "meaningless talk" (1:6). However, two of the leaders were actually excommunicated by Paul for denying the future resurrection of believers (1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18). Paul also instructs Timothy how to conduct worship, appoint leaders for the church, how to discipline them, and how to relate to different groups within the membership.

STUDY THE PASSAGE: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

Paul wrote First Timothy to encourage his young assistant in a difficult situation. He had left Timothy to correct some false teaching among the Christians in Ephesus. Paul may have written the verses we'll study today because the false teachers were challenging both his message of the gospel and authority as an apostle of Jesus Christ. Paul wanted to reassure Timothy that Jesus did call him in a unique way and for a unique purpose, which the false teachers probably could not claim for themselves. And Paul restated the salvation message very clearly so that Timothy could expose any false teachings that were distracting the believers from trusting in Jesus alone.

- 1. Would one person in the group to read the passage aloud from a modern translation? How does Paul begin his testimony?**

He begins with Christ, not himself.

- 2. Why do you think He gives Jesus credit right from the start?**

The life of a Christian is all about a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is not just following some moral teachings or rules. Paul knows himself and what he was like before meeting Christ. He knows he was at odds with Jesus and therefore wouldn't qualify for apostleship if Jesus hadn't turned his life around. Paul cannot think of his present life—as a Christian, as a child of God, as an apostle or servant of Jesus—apart from how much God has done for him and in him. Paul's identity is found

completely in Christ (Phil. 3:3-11) and his message is told in terms of what Jesus has done for him.

***What have you used in the past as an opener in sharing your testimony?**

Honestly, most of us begin with ourselves, our favorite topic of conversation, and that is not always wrong. We may open talking about a need that we believe the hearer can identify with, thus trying to connect with them at a heart level. However, it is good to be challenged by how Paul maintains focus on Christ, not himself.

3. What three words does Paul use to describe himself before he met Christ?

Briefly discuss what each of these means. It's ok to give a definition if the group doesn't know, but then be sure to ask them the follow up question #3 about how they would treat someone who had these character traits.

- **Blasphemer**
To “blaspheme” is to deny God, or to speak with lack of respect for God, or to equate yourself with God. In Judaism, it was forbidden in the Ten Commandments to misuse the Lord’s name (Ex. 20:7) since a person’s name represents his/her character. To dishonor God’s name was the same as to dishonor Him. While Paul never misused God’s name, he did deny that Jesus was God in the flesh until he powerfully met the Risen Lord. Jesus was accused of blasphemy because on various occasions He indicated that He had seen God, was equal to God, or was God (e.g., John 5:16-18; 8:58-59; 10:31-33; Matt. 26:22-26)].
- **Persecutor**
To “persecute” is to harass in a manner designed to injure, grieve or afflict, and specifically, to cause to suffer because of belief. Paul says numerous times in his letters that he persecuted the church before his conversion (1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13, 23; Phil. 3:6; 1 Tim. 1:13; Ebel, p. 806). In Acts 7:57 and 8:1, we learn he witnessed the violent stoning of Stephen while guarding the clothes of the killers and approving of their actions. He went from house to house and dragged believers off to prison in attempt to destroy what he thought was a corruption of Judaism (Acts 8:3). He later admitted to going from one synagogue to another to imprison and beat Christians (Acts 22:19). He tried to cause believers to blaspheme, voted to put many to death, and even began traveling outside Jerusalem to squelch this sect (Acts 26:9-11). While traveling to Damascus with the chief priests’ authority to persecute Christians there, he encountered the Risen Christ who confronted him with the question, “Why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:4). So Paul realized that he not only caused great harm to the early Christians but that he was injuring Jesus Christ also!
- **Violent**
This Greek word, *hybristes*, only occurs twice in the New Testament and the other time it is translated “insolent” (Rom. 1:30). “Insolent”, “arrogant”, and one “who treats others badly” are closer to the intended meaning than “violent” (Guting, pp.

27-28; Stott, p. 51). *Insolent* describes someone who insults and shows no respect for another.

***What three words would describe your life before Jesus Christ?**

This question is not essential, but it could help people begin to formulate the first part of their testimonies. Answers to this will vary depending on how comfortable members of the group feel sharing their past with one another. You may need to model the kind of answers you are looking for by going first, so prepare two or three like Paul did. Or, first lay down a couple of ground rules about what is or isn't appropriate to share in the group setting such as not sharing anything that would be too intimate or cause others to sin in their thoughts. This is not designed to be a time of confession or a therapy group where one just spills his/her guts. You also need to limit how long you spend on this one answer in relation to the time planned for discussing the entire study.

**4. What kind of treatment did Paul deserve? (How would you have acted toward Paul?)
How did Jesus treat Paul?**

Many of us would have wanted to put someone like Paul in his place or have nothing to do with him. But Jesus showed Paul mercy. *Mercy* can be defined as compassion or "lengthy endurance" shown especially to someone who has offended you or is under your power. Jesus did not immediately judge Paul for his hostile behavior, but compassionately spared his life and reoriented it so that Paul would carry the message of mercy and reconciliation to others.

Paul says in verse twelve that Jesus has "*appointed*" him to serve and in verse one that God has *commanded* him to be an apostle, a key player in the kingdom! Paul again gives Jesus the credit when he thanks Jesus for (a) giving him "strength" or enabling him to become a servant; and (b) for considering him "faithful," or better, "trustworthy" for this mission. He says Jesus Christ has given him the ability to carry on and to be reliable so that he might have this privilege (Fee, p. 51). Paul does not in any way try take credit for his own good qualities or hard work. This actually should give us great hope since we often think that Paul was somehow superior to us and that we can never serve Christ the way that such a super saint did. The truth is that the basis for serving Christ is our willingness to humble ourselves, be saved by His grace, and to obey what He gives us to do.

If someone asks why Paul would need "strength" you could briefly explain that Paul traveled extensively without luxury vehicles or motels; often had inadequate food, income or sleep; and at times was abandoned and lonely. He had faced great opposition from both Jews and pagans when preaching the gospel and establishing churches. Now he even faced opposition from people claiming to be Christians!

***How has Jesus treated you?**

God has shown each of us incredible mercy, too. All of us were spiritually dead as a result of our sin and under the judgment of death by God. But because God is rich in mercy, we have been forgiven of our sin and made alive through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:1-5). While we were still His enemies, Christ Jesus died in our place and took that penalty of death from us and gave us His sinless record (Rom. 5:6-8; 2 Cor. 5:21). Just like Paul and others who have had a great impact in bringing others into relationship with Christ, we can serve as messengers of God's mercy and love. And, it doesn't depend on what we were like before we came into a relationship with Christ.

5. What does Paul think were Jesus' reasons for being so kind?

Paul states that he acted in ignorance and unbelief (v. 14). In other words, Paul did not comprehend what Jesus had done, and he did not set out to defy Jesus while knowing the truth. See Acts 22:3 and 26:9 (Stott, p. 54).

***Why do we usually think God is kind to people?**

We often believe the lie that "God helps those who help themselves"—which is really Benjamin Franklin's saying and is not found in Scripture. Or, we think that God is kind to those who are "good" people and who do a lot of good for others. But the gospel completely contradicts these! The reason that the gospel is "good news" is that God doesn't base His treatment of us on what we have done or have not done. The forgiveness and new life we receive from Him are totally based on what Jesus did while on earth—perfectly obeying the Father even to death and fulfilling all the requirements of His law.

6. Do either ignorance or unbelief excuse our sinful behavior?

No, we are all responsible before God for our sinful choices. We all know that we mess up. God has given each person a conscience that nudges or confronts us when we have broken His moral laws. Paul states that we are without excuse for our sin, and that it is really our unwillingness—our stubbornness of heart/mind/will—that defies acknowledging God exists, and defies thanking Him for all He has given us. Instead, we suppress the truth that God exists which is easy to see in creation; and we substitute seeking people or material things—nature, possessions, work, pleasure, etc. (Rom. 1:18-23) for seeking and worshiping God. John Stott reminds us that Acts 3:17 & 19 says we need to repent even if our sins were committed unknowingly (p. 54).

7. What does Paul say was Jesus' reason for coming to earth?

Jesus came into the world to save sinners (v. 15). You can move on quickly from this point, but it is a statement Paul emphasizes to the church. You should know however, that Paul means so much more when he uses the word, "save" than a mere ticket out of hell to heaven. For Paul, "salvation" is the over-arching word that refers to God's work to not only rescue people from sin and death but also to free

them from their past lifestyle, and to give them a new life that begins now but will continue into eternity. Jesus meant for people to experience and serve God now, through the power of His Spirit until, after physical death, they could experience heaven and a new body in the Presence of Jesus Christ. God freely gives all of this as a gift through faith in His Son. Paul states it is a gift because we are unable to rescue, forgive, regenerate, or transform ourselves (Liefeld, p .293).

In witnessing to other “religious” people and even those who claim no religion, they might attest to Jesus as a wise teacher who taught how to love others. Some may even call Him a prophet who revealed part of God’s truth, or a revolutionary who came to shake up the *status quo* of the church and society. Some Christians even see Jesus as Savior but limit His influence to providing a ticket to heaven where we will one day experience the kingdom. But, this is not what Paul says. We are not proclaiming the gospel when we fail to emphasize His Lordship over all of life and His Spirit’s power now to transform and empower His people to bring kingdom reality into our everyday experiences. And without these, we have very little good news to offer.

Paul might emphasize the truth of this statement to Timothy and the church because the false teachers were not only teaching untrue but unimportant issues. Paul wants Timothy and the church to stay focused, even in the midst of the controversies, on the primary mission of Jesus.

8. How does Paul view himself even after being saved many years?

He still identifies himself as a sinner (vv. 15-16), saved by the gracious, free gift of God (v. 14). Note that *chief* is literally “first” and has the meaning of foremost here. In other places in his writings, Paul calls himself an apostle, a servant, and a prisoner of Christ, as well as a father and brother to other believers. But he never stops identifying himself with those who are in need of salvation, and he loves to tell the story of what a merciful God he serves.

9. Why do many Christians avoid calling themselves sinners?

This question is not the most important one, but if your group has a hard time identifying with the unsaved, you might want to include it. Most likely, pride tempts us to avoid calling ourselves sinners in need of God’s mercy, forgiveness, etc. As we identify less and less with our old lifestyle, and walk in new habits with new friends, it is easy to begin to examine our outward behaviors and think we are somehow “better” than we used to be. In some ways, we will have improved, but the change that is taking place still points to God’s work in us, not merely our own achievement. Each of us can only be saved by God’s gift through Christ’s effort, so none of us has grounds to boast (Eph. 2:8-10).

***How easy is it for you to acknowledge your sin to others?**

You might ask this rhetorically and simply encourage folks to think about this.

10. What else does Paul point out about Jesus' character?

He mentions Jesus' grace and generosity (v. 14 "grace poured out on me abundantly"), and mercy and unlimited patience (v. 16).

***What makes it hard for us to be generous and patient with others?**

Unlike Jesus, we do not have truly pure hearts that perfectly love others. Rather than acting in ways to meet others needs, we generally pursue our own best interest and show frustration with those who, instead of focusing 100% of the time on us, are self-interested, too.

***How has Jesus been generous and patient with you?**

11. How does Paul end his testimony?

He ends just as he begins, with Christ. He stresses God's qualities that place Him above anyone else—His sovereign rule over all; His existence from before human time began till after time as we know it ends; His immortality; His hidden yet real presence; His unique divinity; and His praiseworthiness for all time. This is the view of God that keeps Paul trusting and working faithfully as an apostle or messenger of good news. This is the view we should have as we portray the Triune God to the world.

APPLYING THE TEXT

***In summary, what does Jesus offer to those who believe in Him?**

Jesus' offer of salvation is not only forgiveness for sin and an eternity with Him in heaven; it is also a gift of a whole new way of life. It is a deposit of His Holy Spirit who begins a transformation in us so that we might serve God's purposes in this life and bring His will into our daily arenas. Just as Paul was saved from being a persecutor of the church to a believer who carried the message of the kingdom to others, so each of us has a new identity and destiny in God's plans. Our joy becomes telling others our story of how God's Son has saved and is changing us, and our greater joy is to invite and see some of them embrace Him as well.

***Who do you know that has not yet received Jesus' gift of eternal life?**

The questions below are for you to use if there is time and you want to help the group members see more clearly those whom God has placed in their lives. Don't feel obligated to use these if the first question elicits enough response, but if folks seem clueless, then you could ask them to think about these during the week, too.

***Who seems most interested in the gospel?**

***Which of the people you know seems least interested?**

- *Do any of them remind you of Paul before his conversion?**
- *Choose one person you want to share your story with, and pray this week for an opportunity to speak with him/her.**

You can choose to pray for one person each, but because this study gives the following handout as homework, you can repeat the application at the end of next week. With group members who already are burdened with guilt or shame regarding evangelism, be careful to keep expectations low. Sharing their story is meant to be a non-threatening way for them to engage in evangelism more frequently. Once they overcome that hurdle, it will be easier to encourage them to pray for the lost because they will be dialoging with the unsaved more often.

WRAPPING IT UP

Let's briefly go over the handout on "Telling My Story." We are going to take a copy home and work through it this week as our homework, and bring it back for our next meeting. It will help us organize our thoughts so that we can practice and be ready for divine appointments God may arrange for us to share what He's done in our lives. This material came from other handouts that Stephen VanDop and Dennis Stranges wrote.

Hand out one copy to each person. Allow a few minutes for them to look it over before continuing with instructions.

This week, please set aside about thirty minutes to work through this simple handout. (That's about the length of time it takes for one load of laundry to wash or for two pots of coffee to brew in case folks think you're asking too much.) Ask the Lord to help you put into words the great things He's done in your life. Ask Him to help you express yourself, so that in the future what you share with others might give them hope. Don't try to get perfect sentences down. The idea is to jot down the main points and then we can polish our stories later. Remember, your story is unique, so it won't sound like anyone else's. So don't fall into a trap of comparing it to others in this group or other testimonies you may have heard in the past.

Close in prayer praising God for His great love that has reached out and touched our lives. Pray for His Holy Spirit to protect and assist each person as he/she grows in reaching others effectively for Christ.

TELLING MY STORY

When you are giving testimony in court, you provide evidence of facts that relate to the case. When you give a testimonial, you are noting what someone you admire has done. When we are witnesses to Jesus Christ, we are telling others the facts about the wonderful things He has done in our lives. Therefore:

- Keep the focus on the Lord Jesus Christ, not yourself.
- Use simple language. Watch out for Christian terms that someone who never goes to church would find strange.
- Be honest about your sin, but don't describe details that would cause others to stumble.
- Include something about your life before Christ, how you met Christ, and what a difference He has made in your life.
- Don't bore people with irrelevant details or repetition. Be able to give a short version in 2-5 minutes.
- Don't exaggerate in order to make it more sensational. The power is in the gospel not our words.

Let's work through the following questions in order to write a simple testimony we can quickly share with others. Keep your answers short and simple. No one is going to grade this, so write freely without concern for getting it "right."

Note: if you accepted Jesus Christ as a young child, start with question 3.

1. What was your spiritual viewpoint before accepting Christ?

Example: I thought as long as I was a basically good person, then I was ok.

2. How did your spiritual attitudes negatively affect your life and relationships?

Example: I was nervous if others talked about dying, because I didn't really have a clear concept of what would happen after I died. Or: I was always trying to be perfect so others would not reject me, but it made my relationships very difficult because I was so judgmental of myself and others.

3. How did you hear the Gospel message?

Examples: My mom told me that we all disobey God, and He didn't like that. But He loved me so much that Jesus took my punishment when he died on the cross. Or: A friend shared his/her story with me over lunch one day at work.

4. What was it about the message that affected you?

Example: I learned that there was nothing I could do to be good enough to get into heaven. Jesus was the only person who lived a perfect life.

5. What was your response to that message?

Example: I was insulted at first, but then over several weeks, it seemed that what I kept noticing were my failings/sins.

6. Specifically, how did you receive Christ?

Example: I went to church with my friend and when the pastor gave the invitation to come forward to receive Christ, I felt inwardly that I had to make a decision. I was keenly aware that Christ had died for me personally, not just for the whole world or as an example of how to live for others.

Note: If you accepted Christ as a child, you could emphasize in the next two questions what your life growing up with Him was like compared to what it may have been like if you hadn't. However, don't try to fabricate a story to make it more interesting.

7. How did your attitude and life change after you received Christ?

(Look back at your answer to question 2, and relate how that problem improved or was resolved.)

Examples: I am less afraid when people talk about death, and now look forward to seeing some of my loved ones who also prayed to receive Christ but have passed away. Or: I am less judgmental of others and myself because Christ has forgiven my sin and accepts me even though I am not perfect.

8. What other benefits have you experienced since Christ became Lord and Savior of your life?

Examples: My life is more peaceful especially when I take time to sit quietly in God's presence and just feel that He is in and with me. Or: When others hurt me, I can take those feelings to the cross and find comfort and healing in Jesus' power to identify with my pain and to take it from me.

9. What struggles are you continuing to have, and how is God making a difference?

Examples: I still struggle with anxiety and things outside my control, but when I remember God's promises to care for me and to work all things out for my good as I continue to love and serve Him, then I can let go of my attempts to control more easily. Or: I still struggle with doing things perfectly to get others' approval, but God is increasingly freeing me to admit my mistakes to others without feeling like a complete failure.

Now that we have answered these questions, we want to weave the responses into a story format so that we sound more natural when we share with others. Use the space below to copy the most important thoughts from each question, grouping questions 1-3 (before Christ was in my life); 4-6 (how I met Christ); and 7-9 (what a difference Christ has made in my life). Remember, we are aiming for 2-5 minutes when sharing this with others so we don't bore them. It's better to whet their appetites and have them ask for more than to try to stuff them full and have them reject the whole experience.

This handout was adapted from Stephen VanDop's "Telling Your Story" and Dennis Stranges' "The Do's and Don't's of Giving Testimonies."

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1 Timothy 1: 12–17

Part One

By Elizabeth B. Crawford

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AIM OF STUDY

- To learn how to tell the story of what God has done in saving us and to write a brief version of it to share it with others.

KEY VERSES

“Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.” 1 Tim. 1:15-16

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Note: Since this is a follow-up to last week’s study, pray for your group members during the week as they complete the handout, “Telling My Story.” Be sure that you do, too! Then plan to use the second meeting to help them write out a 2-5 minute version of their testimony that can be shared when God opens a door or the Holy Spirit prompts them. You don’t have to be an English major to do this. Just ask the Lord to help you and the group communicate with simple words the essential facts about what He has done in your lives. Also pray for those open doors and open hearts to the gospel. Make extra copies of the handout in case people forget theirs or someone new comes.

OPENERS

Last week we talked about the power of storytelling and studied Paul's brief testimony in 1 Tim. 1:12-17. We also looked over a handout on how to tell our own story. Does everyone have a copy? (Pass out extras to any who forgot or are visiting this week.) I'm excited about hearing your stories and sharing mine with you. So, let's pray and plunge in!

Pray that God would give each person reasons to thank Him and grow in awe of Him through hearing the work He has done in your lives.

STUDY THE PASSAGE: 1 Timothy 1:12-17

1. **Let's reread the key verses of this section in Scripture, verses 15-16. Who will do this?**

As we talk about God's work in our lives, we want to focus on why Jesus came so that the people we share with will understand **He is the one they need to turn to**, not us or some power within themselves. Let's look over some of the guidelines found on the handout, "Telling My Story." Why don't we go around the room and anyone who would like to can read one of these aloud to the group.

Try to have everyone but you do this reading. If there are questions about them, pause briefly to answer, but don't get bogged down here

2. **Now, I'd like to go over my story with you by reading off my short answers to the questions. Then I'll give my testimony in more of a story format so you can see how we'll use the things we wrote down to create a brief story we can tell others.**

Have the group members listen as you read off your answers from 1-9. Try to do this without adding off the cuff remarks, since you'll have difficulty completing everyone's story if you ramble with yours! Then put your paper down, or just hold in your lap, and try to retell the story as you compiled it at the end of the handout. This time, try to maintain more eye contact with the group and rely less on your notes. You could even ask someone with a second hand or stopwatch feature to time you. Remember, you don't have to do this perfectly, but the more this appears natural, the better the experience will be especially for those who have never shared their testimony at all or in such a concise way.

After completing the retelling of your testimony, ask for feedback.

3. **Thanks for listening. I wonder if anyone has any constructive feedback for me, so that I can improve in sharing Christ with others. Since I want each of you to have a turn, let's keep these comments short and specific. Also, focus on the telling, not so much on the details of my life.**

If you don't receive much feedback, you could ask something like:

Did I seem real or authentic, or did this sound too canned? What could I say to connect better with a nonbeliever?

Did I make the gospel message clear enough?

Did it seem that there was a true difference in my life after I met Jesus Christ?

- 4. Let's go ahead and have a volunteer share next. [Optional: First, read through the responses you wrote down to the questions.] Then, try to tell us your story as briefly but clearly as possible. Remember, this isn't a contest to see who has the most polished or most sensational story. We want to help each other practice telling what happened in your life so that you feel better prepared to share it with others when God opens a door.**

Try to get as many group members to practice in front of the group as possible. One suggestion for very large groups is to divide into two or three smaller groups for this section. However, be sure that a co-leader or someone who has shared his or her faith numerous times will be in each group and can moderate the process.

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At the end of the time you have allowed for this exercise, close with prayer and offer to assist anyone having difficulty. You or another leader could set up a time to go through this so that each person feels equipped to share when an opportunity arises.

At the end, be sure to close in prayer thanking the Lord for all He has done in our lives and asking for the privilege to share this with someone this week.

This would be a good time to return to the application question from week one which is reprinted below, and specifically choose one person that folks would pray for and try to talk with this week.

***Choose one person you want to share your story with, and pray this week for an opportunity to speak with him/her.**

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