



FRESH START

You are beginning life's most satisfying adventure – your walk with God! As you start this adventure, here's what God says to you:

Count yourself lucky, how happy you must be —you get a fresh start, your slate's wiped clean. Psalm 32:11 (MSG)

When you make a commitment of your life to Jesus, not only is your "slate wiped clean", you also get a "fresh start" – a new lease on life. This class is designed to help you have a good start to your fresh start. During these weeks together you'll discover and begin to unwrap ten gifts that God gives you:

- F**ORGIVENESS – Accepting God's Grace
- R**ELATIONSHIP – Worshipping
- E**NCOURAGEMENT – Handling Failure
- S**CRIPTURE – Understanding God's Word
- H**ELP – Following God's Guidance

- S**HAPE – Being You
- T**OGETHERNESS – Living in Community
- A**UTHORITY – Serving Others
- R**ECOGNITION – Being Baptized
- T**ESTIMONY – Telling Your Story

This session: TESTIMONY – Telling Your Story

*Anyone who believes in the Son of God has this **testimony** in his heart. 1 John 5:10 (NIV)*

My testimony is: telling someone what has happened in my life

*I know this: I **was blind**, and **now I can see!** John 9:25 (NLT)*

John faithfully reported the word of God and the **testimony** of Jesus Christ – **everything he saw**. Revelation 1:2 (NLT)

What are the ways I share my story?

1. The way I live.

Let your good deeds **shine out for all to see**, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. Matthew 5:16 (NLT)

What are some ways that we could let our lights shine?

Is it hard to tell when the light is on or off? Not usually? Why? Because the light makes so much difference? When we live our lives as Jesus lived, we bring light to our streets, neighborhood, state, nation, and our world.

Be very careful, then, **how you live** – not as unwise but as wise, **making the most of every opportunity**.... Ephesians 5:15-16 (NIV)

Wow! What a statement. Make the most of every opportunity. I think one of the most difficult times to figure out how you're supposed to live this life as a Christian, happens near the beginning of your walk with Christ, right after you become a believer. It's a common struggle. Let's watch this video.

I want you to know that if you just live right, that's not enough. It takes more than that to share your story. Here's the second thing...

2. What I say.

Tell everyone you meet what He has done! Psalm 105:1b (MSG)

How we live and what we say are like two prongs on a pair of tongs or two sides to scissors – one without the other is ineffective. Living our faith without talking about it, or talking about it without living it always comes up empty. We need both.

Let's say you see someone along the road with a flat tire. Their hood is up and they're in distress. You stop and offer assistance. They have no spare. You drive them to the next exit and get their tire fixed. You drive them back and help them put it back on. You wait until they make it back to the road. They compliment you, they appreciate you. They drive away not giving credit to God for your good deeds but to you. They say, "That was the nicest person I've ever met."

Jesus said let your light shine so they see your good deeds and who gets the credit? That's right, God does.

So, how can you do that? When they thank you, respond, "Glad to do it, considering how much God has done for me." or "As a Christian, I was thrilled to do that for you." Or if they ask what they can do for you, say, "How about going to church with me this weekend?" Here are some.

Tips for telling others about Jesus:

- Use tact

Tact is the ability to make people feel at home when you wish they were!

It's simply being kind and courteous with the words you choose to use. An obnoxious Christian is worse than a silent one.

- Consider pace

Not everyone is ready for the whole message all at once. Pace it. Evangelism works best over time. Even Jesus told His followers on one occasion: "There is much more I want to tell you, but you are not ready for it yet."

- Demonstrate love

Relationships allow us to gain a hearing for the gospel. People do not care how much we know until they know how much we care.

- Be authentic

We do not have to be perfect to be a witness, but we do have to be real. The people we talk to about Jesus must sense a longing in us to be like Jesus and an honest love for him.

That's earning the right to be heard.

Why is my testimony important?

1. It is unique!

No one else has exactly the same testimony as yours.

2. It is personal.

It really happened to you. You're not talking about what happened to someone else or what you've heard. It's personal.

3. I am the authority on it.

People cannot question with any legitimacy what you're telling them. It was your experience, you are the authority on what has happened in your life.

4. People love stories.

That's why novels still sell, video rental stores boom, and we'll pay good money to go see a movie at the cinema.

5. Others can relate to it.

When you tell others your story, there are going to be points of connection. And they might think, "Yeah, I understand that. Yeah, I'm facing something like that too."

Why should I share my story?

1. God is counting on me.

*You are the ones **chosen** by God, ... God's instruments **to do His work** and **speak out for Him**, to tell others of the night-and-day difference He made for you.... 1 Peter 2:9 (MSG)*

It's part of God's plan that you help bring others to Him. He knows your circles of influence better than you do. He's counting on you to speak out for Him.

2. Jesus has commissioned me.

God authorized and commanded Me to **commission** you: Go out. Matthew 28:19 (MSG)

What do I say?

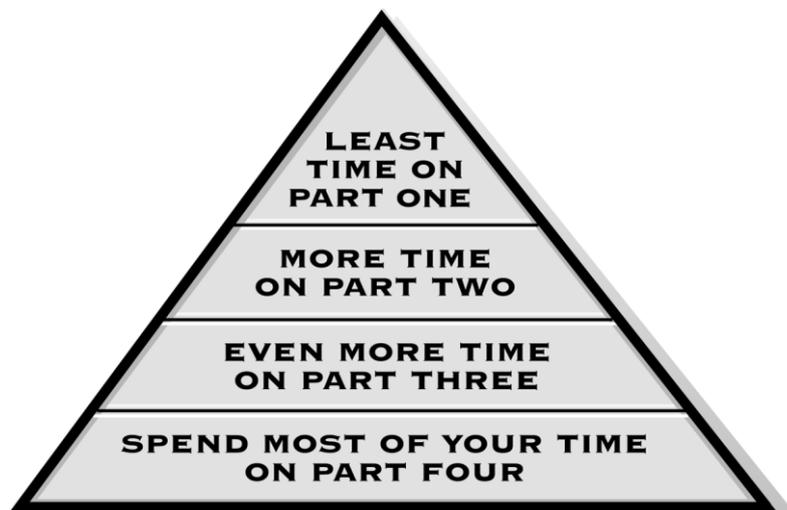
When I first came to you to let you in on God's master stroke, I **didn't try to impress** you with polished speeches and the latest philosophy. I deliberately **kept it plain and simple**: first Jesus and who He is; then Jesus and what He did—Jesus crucified. 1 Corinthians 2:1-2 (MSG)

How to keep my testimony plain and simple:

1. What my life was like before becoming a Christian.
2. What caused me to realize I needed to become a Christian.
3. How I became a Christian.
4. How my life is different since becoming a Christian.

These four parts and how much time to spend on them are pictured in "The Testimony Pyramid."

The Testimony Pyramid



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I want to give you time now to make your first attempt at writing your testimony. This is not a final draft, you'll refine it again and again. But, let's just get started thinking in a logical progression about what Jesus has done for us.

My first attempt at putting together my testimony:

Part 1: What my life was like before becoming a Christian.

Part 2: What caused me to realize I needed to become a Christian.

Part 3: How I became a Christian.

Part 4: How my life is different since becoming a Christian.

Pulling it all Together

These are the 10 gifts that God has given you for a Fresh Start!

FORGIVENESS – *Accepting God's Grace*
RELATIONSHIP – *Worshipping*
ENCOURAGEMENT – *Handling Failure*
SCRPTURE – *Understanding God's Word*
HELP – *Following God's Guidance*

SHAPE – *Being You*
TOGETHERNESS – *Living in Community*
AUTHORITY – *Serving Others*
RECOGNITION – *Being Baptized*
TESTIMONY – *Telling Your Story*

What gifts can I give back to God?

1. Be baptized.

When I ask my children to do something and they do it, that's a gift to me. It shows they value me, they respect me, and they're willing to do what I ask. The same thing is true for us when we do what God asks us to do, like being baptized.

2. Begin to share my testimony by inviting others.

- **to my baptism**

This can be such a significant time for you to let others know the life-changing decision you have made to follow Jesus. Physically and verbally you will be witnessing to them.

- **to services**

Our services are seeker-sensitive. You know we won't put anyone on the spot or embarrass them. 85% of Americans have said they would attend church if someone they knew would invite them.

3. Continue to grow.

Grow in grace and understanding of our Master and Savior, Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3:18 (MSG)

Why does God want you to grow? Because everything that's alive is moving one of two directions: growing or dying.

So, what's your next step? If you haven't been baptized, that's it. Then what? (Note: Encourage class members to register for the next session of CLASS or for other educational opportunities provided by the church.)

As we close, let's read the key verse for Fresh Start with God together. It so clearly describes what has happened in your life.

**Count yourself lucky, how happy you must be —
you get a fresh start, your slate's wiped clean.**

Psalm 32:11 (MSG)

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