ARTICULATING THE GOSPEL
A WORKSHOP ON SHARING YOUR FAITH

PRE-GAME
In the book of Colossians, Paul prays that God may open a door for the message of the gospel (Colossians 4:4). You likely have prayed a similar prayer for a teammate, a classmate, a friend or a family member. But what if God actually answers your prayer? Would you be prepared? Would you know what to say? God does answer this prayer and puts people in our lives who are interested and willing to hear about Christ. We, like Paul, most also pray that we would be able to proclaim the message clearly (Colossians 4:4). This study is a workshop that will help you articulate your faith in a clear, concise way through a personal testimony and a 30-second gospel summary. These tools will help you to practically make the most of every opportunity that God gives you to share your faith with those who are interested (Colossians 4:5).

THEME
God will provide us with opportunities to share our faith with those who are already interested in hearing about Christ. In these instances, we need to present the basics of the gospel in a clear, concise and personal way that addresses the unique needs of others.

PRACTICE
Because God has called us to make the most of every opportunity in witnessing, we should be prepared with the tools of a clear personal testimony and a concise gospel summary that lay out the main themes of the gospel message and how it is changing our lives.

SYMBOL KEY

+ Indicates discussion questions

 Indicates Biblical passages to look up

 Indicates application questions to be discussed
I. SHARING YOUR PERSONAL TESTIMONY—WORKSHEET

The power and purpose of a personal testimony

What are some situations in which having a clear, concise personal testimony would be useful? What advantages are there to this approach to evangelism?

Sharing the message of Christianity in the context of your personal experience is one of the simplest, most useful ways of articulating the gospel. Because stories and personal experiences are seen as legitimate and powerful forms of communication most people are open to hearing about how Christ is influencing your life.

Read Acts 25:23 - 26:28
- Why do you think Paul chose a personal testimony as a defense here?
- What general elements do you see in Paul’s testimony (26:1-23)?

A personal testimony like Paul’s is an effective means of articulating your faith. Here’s what it can accomplish:

- Expresses how you came to know Christ and how he is changing your life
- Communicates the basis of our faith in the context of a personal experience
- Opens doors for a more extensive conversation on spiritual matters
- Explains the reason for certain actions and choices in our lives
- Helps you determine someone’s spiritual interest and questions

Guidelines for writing a personal testimony:

Before you begin to write your personal testimony, here are a couple of do’s and don’ts to keep in mind:

Do:
- Write it down! A 3 minute story is no more than 2 pages, double spaced.
- Choose a theme. Pick an area of your life that Christ has / is changing - i.e. identity, self worth, performance, acceptance, freedom, forgiveness, etc.
- Follow a 3 point outline!
  - Life before knowing Christ
  - How you came to know Christ
  - How Christ is changing you now
- Practice and get feedback!
- Memorize it! This will come in handy when you are nervous.

Don’t:
- Wing it! Being prepared will make you and your audience more comfortable.
- Use churchy words. ‘saved’, ‘atonement,’ ‘converted,’ ‘walk with God,’ etc.
- Mention church denominations in a critical or derogatory way!
- Be wordy or vague. Be clear, concise and specific. Use illustrations.
- Give the impression that you only experienced Christ in the past. Tell them how Christ is changing your life now.

For other examples of testimonies see:
- Acts 22:1-21
- Philippians 3:2-16
- John 4:39-42

keys to a good testimony:
- concise: 3 minutes is short enough to hold others’ attention
- creative: themes and illustrations help others understand
- clear: your experience and the gospel are understandable
- current: how is Christ changing you today?
Writing your personal testimony:

Part I - Life Before Christ

A. What did you believe about God or spirituality before Christ? Where did you get these ideas and how did they influence you?

B. What were you trusting as a source of fulfillment, significance or happiness other than Christ? What actions, attitudes or struggles did this lead to in your life?

C. How did God begin to reveal your need for spiritual truth?

Part II - How you became a Christian

A. How did you first come to repent and believe in Christ? What did it take in order for this to happen?

Remember to pick a theme!

*This format works primarily for adult/youth conversions.

If you came to faith as a child through a Christian home, you can skip to Part III and describe in detail a need in your life that Christ has changed.

Biblical examples of childhood conversions:

- Psalm 22:9,10
- 2 Timothy 1:5

“The Gospel teaches that we are more sinful and flawed than we ever imagined and yet are more loved and accepted than we can ever dream.”
- Tim Keller
B. How did specific promises / aspects of the gospel address your needs and struggles? 
How did this change you?

Part III - How Christ is Influencing Your Life Now

A. How is the truth about Christ and the gospel changing and influencing you today? 
Remember, you don’t want to give the impression that the Christian’s life is perfect.

B. Come up with a good ending that ties together your themes and points to your 
continual need for the gospel.

How would you transition into your testimony? What questions do you think a 
non-believer would likely ask after hearing your testimony?

There are 4 main 
messages of the 
gospel:

- God
- Man / Sin
- Christ
- Repentance / Faith

Our testimony is not 
as much about when 
we think we first 
believed as it is about 
how Christ is 
continuing to save 
us now.

“Therefore, as you 
received Christ 
Jesus the Lord, so 
walk in him.”
- Colossians 2:6

“The gospel is more 
than a gate you pass 
through one time. It is 
a path you get on to 
and never get off.”
I. SHARING A GOSPEL SUMMARY

How would you summarize the gospel in 2 or 3 sentences? Give it a try.

Living out the Christian life through our actions and moral choices is a good way of demonstrating the gospel to others. But, if this is the only way we share our faith, others will know where we stand but not why we are standing there. When God provides us with open doors to share our faith, we need to be prepared to give a short gospel summary that clearly explains the meaning of Christianity.

Read Acts 10:30-43
- What are some of the key points that Peter addresses?
- On what theme is Peter basing this summary?

Here are 2 examples of gospel summaries built around themes:

DO / DONE SUMMARY*

DO: First it’s important to understand the difference between religion and Christianity. Religion always consists of things people try to do to gain God’s forgiveness and favor. The problem is we can never be sure we’ve done enough. Worse yet, the Bible tells us we can never do enough to measure up to God’s perfect standard.

DONE: But the Good News of Christianity is that what we could never do for ourselves, God has already done for us by sending His Son to live the life we’ve failed to live and then die on the cross to pay the debt we deserve to pay for the wrongs we’ve done.

THE GOOD NEWS is that God has raised Jesus from the dead and now promises the free gift of forgiveness and supernatural power for living to anyone who will turn from their sin and self-trust and place their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord.

SLAVERY / FREEDOM SUMMARY*

SLAVERY: Our hearts were created with a longing to worship. Every person – whether religious or not – is worshiping something as a way of finding significance, meaning and worth in their lives. God calls us to worship him but we instead live for love, work, success or a moral life. These God-substitutes can enslave us. We feel guilty if we fail to attain them; we are angry if someone blocks our pursuit of them; we are fearful if these substitutes are threatened; or we are driven to unhealthy busyness since we believe we cannot live without them. We are trapped whenever we worship anything in place of God.

FREEDOM: We can have freedom by worshiping God alone through faith in Jesus Christ. He is the only source of meaning that we cannot lose, thus freeing us from guilt and fear. He is the only source of approval and love that does not rest on our own work, thus freeing us from endless guilt and driven-ness. In Christ, we have a great treasure, promising us lasting freedom and significance. Having faith in him involves joyfully turning away from all our God-substitutes and trusting Christ alone to be the only object of our worship.

What does open door sound like?
“What does it mean to be a Christian, anyway?”

*Modified from Bill Hybels in Becoming a Contagious Christian

*Modified from Tim Keller in What Does it Mean to Know God?
Try modifying one of these gospel summaries and making it your own. Or, try coming up with another theme and writing your own summary.

**Writing your gospel summary:**

- What is your theme?

- Summary -

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**III. POST-GAME**

God will put people in our lives who are curious about our faith and interested in hearing about Christ. When God provides us with these open doors, we need to be prepared to communicate the gospel in a clear, concise way. Developing a personal testimony and a gospel summary are two useful and effective tools for communicating the reason for the hope that we have in Christ.